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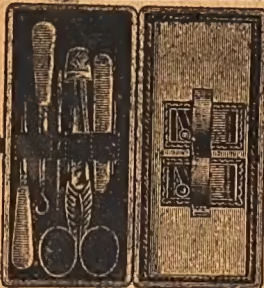
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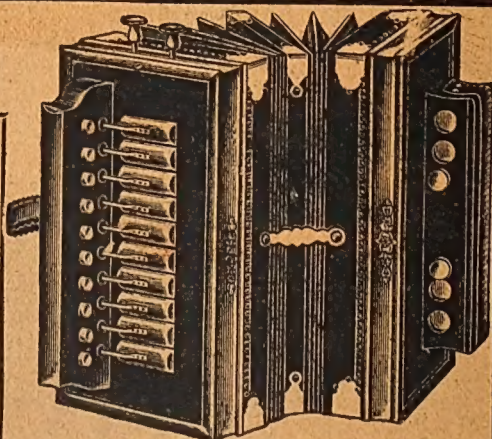
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SHORT STORIES.

No. 641.]

For the Week Ending April 19th, 1901.

[ONE PENNY.]

AKeeper of Secrets

By R. NORMAN SILVER.



Being Days in the Professional Life of the late Mr. Hugo Pontifex, the Famous West-end Solicitor,

To those who had only met him casually in Society, the late Mr. Pontifex was a good-tempered mystery. Bluff, handsome, and, in spite of his middle-age, a little of a dandy, he seemed the last man in the world to deserve his reputation, which was that of the keenest, most audacious, and unerring of family lawyers. Fair-haired, and powerful as an athlete, his striking appearance was increased by his eyes, one of which was grey and one blue.

In reality, however, Hugo Pontifex had a wide and almost exclusively aristocratic practice. He seldom briefed a barrister, seldom set foot in a court of justice, but single handed he hunted down, captured, and safely buried mystery after mystery of terrible import to Mayfair and Belgravia.

An expert in strangling scandal, he lived a life of enthralling interest, and died a rich man. When his executors went through his papers they found nothing to satisfy their curiosity, though plenty to excite it. Hugo Pontifex knew the value of fire—and the dangers of ink. But from time to time he related to the writer, who enjoyed a certain measure of his confidence, the incidents which form the basis of the following stories. In speaking of these strange fragments of drama, Mr. Pontifex himself employed fictitious names, the present author being left to guess vainly at the identity of the genuine actors.

THE AFFAIR OF THE JAPANESE VALET.

For some time there lay upon the marble mantelpiece in Mr. Pontifex's private room, an elaborately-carved wooden pipe, with a long stem. About this pipe hung a faint and almost indescribable odour—an odour that was neither the scent of tobacco, nor of opium. Twisted loosely to the slender tube was a thin plait of something glossy and golden—a braid of human hair, obviously from a woman's head.

The series of events that brought these peculiar articles into the solicitor's possession began with the visit of Lieutenant Francis Howard, R.N., to Mr. Pontifex's offices in St. James' Street.

Francis Howard was an attractive young officer, with the cleanly-shaven jaw and strong, cheerful countenance so frequent in the Navy; Mr. Pontifex took a fancy to his visitor before the Lieutenant had concluded the first few sentences of an embarrassed explanation.

"I'm afraid you'll think rather badly of me," confessed the visitor, frankly, "but the fact is, I want you to corner a rival of mine. Not because he is a rival of mine, but because he's a consummate blackguard. At least, I believe that's my chief reason, though it is hard to be done out of a girl you've been engaged to for years."

The great lawyer smiled—he liked his client's candour.

"You have summarized the situation admirably," he said, "may I ask for particulars?"

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"The fellow's name," responded Francis Howard grimly, "is Percival Ross—at present he calls himself an explorer; and, to tell the truth, he has knocked about the world a good bit. I met him in Hong Kong, where he was understood to be a newspaper 'special.' He can be pleasant company enough, and I was sufficient of a fool to get intimate with him, and to introduce him to some of the best people in the colony."

He hesitated a moment, then shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Oh well," he pursued; "I suppose I had better admit I told Ross a good deal about myself and my folks, and—and about Linda—that is to say, Miss Brooke, the lady I had been spoons on since I was a middy. He has a way of picking your brains, has Ross, and he picked mine. A pretty use he made of the information I gave him, the hound."

Mr. Pontifex pushed a silver tray across the writing-table—it contained matches and an assortment of cigarettes.

"Thanks," muttered the lieutenant, and, lighting one of the trifles, he puffed mournfully.

"At last," he said; "I detected Ross in what was nothing more or less than a low theft, and from one of my friends at that. I saw him, on a certain evening during my stay at Hong Kong, pocket a little jewelled idol—an incredibly valuable thing—part of a collection

that was being shown us in a house to which I had obtained him an entry."

Francis Howard sighed and blew a cloud of fragrant smoke.

"What was I to do?" he added, "I was responsible for his being there, and a scandal isn't a pretty matter to have on one's hands on the China station. Wisely or unwisely, Mr. Pontifex, I temporized, and, as much for Ross' sake as my own, I kept silent at the moment. The same night I accused him privately. He collapsed instantly, gave me the idol back, told me, with tears, the whole miserable story of his life—a shady, poverty-stricken one it had been, as you may guess—and begged me to spare him. I agreed, on condition that he left Hong Kong forthwith, after signing a brief confession of his guilt and real character, to be published by me if he should venture to return or approach any of the persons to whom I had introduced him. The confession was drawn up and subscribed; Ross sailed for Australia inside a week. I smuggled the idol into its proper receptacle and flattered myself I had disentangled successfully rather an awkward knot."

The lieutenant brushed the ash from his cigarette. Mr. Pontifex noticed that the tanned fingers were quivering, as if with suppressed passion.

"That was two years since," concluded Francis Howard, drily; "I did not see Ross again until three days ago, when, on reaching England to spend a short furlough, I encountered him at the residence of the Brookes—a fellow guest, and unmistakably paying his court to my betrothed."

"Reaching London in the course of his wanderings, he had, I discovered, called on the Brookes, representing himself to be an intimate of mine, had been hospitably received, and had paid them, by then, half-a-dozen lengthy visits, improving, on each occasion, his acquaintance with Linda."

Mr. Pontifex nodded.

"I comprehend," he answered, "the wheel is come full circle. And now you want me to remind Mr. Ross of the confession which you possess, and to urge upon him the inadvisability of driving you to extremes."

The lieutenant coloured.

"Would to Heaven, Mr. Pontifex," he faltered, "I could authorise you to do exactly that. But Ross has been one too many for me already. I had a stormy interview with him on the day of my arrival at the Brookes', and told him, that, rather than pain them by publicly unmasking him, I was prepared to allow him to beat a graceful retreat. If he should refuse, I threatened to show them the confession, of which I gave him a warning glimpse."

"And that glimpse, presumably," remarked the solicitor, "lost you the precious document."

"I fear so," assented Francis Howard, repentantly, "at all events, it was in my keeping that afternoon and the sight of it forced Ross to promise complete obedience to my demands. The next morning he grinned in my face and recommended me to do my worst. Vaguely suspecting the reason for his change of front, I got out my letter-case, in which I had laid the paper on the preceding night. It was gone."

"Exactly!" said Mr. Pontifex, "and if you forgive my brutality, this Percival Ross would have been a fool had he allowed such a damning statement to remain in your charge. Of course he destroyed it immediately upon securing it, and with it, your direct hold over him."

"What puzzles me," declared the Lieutenant, "is this; how did the scoundrel abstract the sheet bearing

his confession? I read it over carefully in my bedroom that very evening, after locking my door. Having satisfied myself that the paper would do what I wanted, I deposited it in my letter-case and went to bed. The following morning, as I have said, the confession was gone."

Mr. Pontifex tossed the end of his cigarette into the tray.

"I must have an opportunity of studying this purloiner of idols and documents," he intimated. "Can you arrange for me to pass a night under the roof of the Brookes?"

"I imagine so," said Francis Howard, "but what do you hope to achieve by that?"

The solicitor set a reproving palm on his client's knee.

"My dear sir," he retorted, "I never hope; I plan, and I accomplish. By the way, is Miss Brooke seriously enamoured of—of your rival?"

"I—I'm not sure," stammered the lieutenant, "I had scarcely mentioned his name when she turned on me like a dear little tigress, saying that she despised jealous men and that I might think what I chose about herself and Mr. Ross."

Mr. Pontifex bit his lip to disguise his mirth. "You have my respectful sympathy," he protested. "And now to business—for even if Miss Brooke proves inconsistent we must save her from this designing rascal. What is the address of the Brookes?"

"They are staying at their place on the river, near Pangbourne," explained Francis Howard.

"Excellent," commented the lawyer, "I will run down late this evening, to see you—on imaginary and important business—and will miss my last train to town. They must needs offer to put me up. So get back to Pangbourne as quickly as you can; it is now"—Mr. Pontifex glanced at his gold hunter—"half-past two," he said, "expect me soon after eight o'clock. The last train to town is about nine-twenty, I shall lose that most convincingly."

"But what is your idea?" demanded the bewildered lieutenant.

"To bait a trap for Mr. Ross," rejoined the solicitor, "that will be easier to enter than to escape from. *Au revoir*, till—till half-past eight." And he dismissed his young client without more ado.

For the succeeding three or four hours Hugo Pontifex worked hard, with never a thought of the lieutenant and his love-affair. Yet at half-past eight precisely he was some forty miles from London, breathing the cool, Thames-side atmosphere, and admiring the dusky beauty of the August twilight as it gathered over the trees and lanes of Pangbourne. Mr. Pontifex was almost sorry when his fly deposited him at the door of a squat and rambling residence whose windows were just beginning to glow with the mellow radiance of its shaded lamps.

The device by which he proposed to obtain a night's lodging in this secluded recess of Berkshire was too simple not to prove effective. He whiled away some sixty minutes in a pretended legal consultation of vital urgency with the lieutenant—a consultation which he managed should be interrupted by the sudden chiming of the second quarter after nine.

Hugo Pontifex was an actor from both instinct and training, and his mock confusion, at the apparant discovery that he was confined to Pangbourne till the morning, might have deceived the shrewdest student of the human countenance.

Tickled by the comedy, Francis Howard played his share in it with spirit, and appealed to his host and hostess, who, as the solicitor had foreseen assured Mr. Pontifex courteously that his misfortune was their gain.

So, with a skilful display of diffidence, the lawyer yielded, and was escorted to Mrs. Brooke's drawing-room—the secret goal of his diplomacy. Here, among other persons, he was made acquainted with Mr. Percival Ross and the capricious Miss Linda herself.



"How clever!" cried Linda Brooke.
"Is it not, Mr. Ross?"

Percival Ross was a tall and sinewy Englishman, boasting a cold, fierce gaze and the moustache of a cowboy. As they exchanged a formal handclasp the solicitor analysed him rapidly.

"Resolute, selfish, unscrupulous," he murmured, "but deficient in daring. Too much of the pick-pocket, not sufficient of the gambler. You are mine, Mr. Ross!"

This verdict recorded, Mr. Pontifex turned his attention to Miss Linda Brooke. He saw in her an unusual type of blonde—graceful, animated, daintily pink-and-white, her eyes dark, her hair a gleaming golden yellow.

She had risen from a settee, where she was playing indolently with a magnificent Persian cat, to bow to the lawyer—not ungraciously, Hugo Pontifex was a striking figure in any assembly—and had sunk again into her cushions. Percival Ross was leaning over the arm of the lounge, talking confidentially to the handsome mistress of the Persian.

Releasing himself adroitly from his host, the solicitor crossed the apartment, and sitting down by the lieutenant's sweetheart, began to chatter to her in his gayest vein. Ross scowled, but Mr. Pontifex ignored him blandly. Francis Howard had retired into a convenient alcove, to observe, at his leisure, the proceedings of his extraordinary ally.

Linda Brooke, Mr. Pontifex quickly perceived, was a coquette, but a coquette of merry and girlish impulses. A jesting compliment and a few scraps of the very freshest gossip enabled him to slip on to a footing of easy good-fellowship with the laughing beauty. He commenced to pet the splendid Persian, a trifling occupation, yet the lawyer had a motive in it.

"Your favourite has a fine head," he said casually, "do you know it is one of my hobbies to collect studies of cats? I sketch them quite passably myself, let me prove it to you."

He whipped out a pencil and several folios of blank paper, and hastily imitated the Persian's sleepy pose.

"How clever!" cried Linda Brooke, "is it not, Mr. Ross?"

Percival Ross surveyed it critically. "Not half bad," he conceded, reluctantly.

"A cat's expression is more difficult to represent than that of a human being," answered Mr. Pontifex, amiably, "now I would guarantee to complete a portrait of Mr. Ross in half as many strokes."

His pencil flew over the paper. "There!" he said, "no one who has ever met Mr. Ross, would fail to recognise that, I fancy. I should like to bet that if I were to circulate that sketch in any part of the world where Mr. Ross's adventurous journeys have carried him, his friends and enemies—in Valparaiso or—in Hong-Kong—would cry out: 'That is Percival Ross.'"

Ross gnawed at his moustache.

"I see," he interrupted, "you know both my Christian name and my profession, Mr. Pontifex."

"Pontifex, my dear sir," corrected the solicitor, stroking at the portrait, "yes, I have heard of you, Mr. Ross. Your Christian name and your profession, however, are common information, for the rest, you are quite an enigma. Are you not going to favour us with a biography, one of these days?"

"I believe not," growled the other, "I am eccentric in that respect, Mr. Pontifex—my eccentricity even extends to a prejudice against having my portrait taken."

Perhaps, having demonstrated your powers, you will either give me your sketch or destroy it."

"That would be too terrible a sacrifice for an amateur artist such as I am," objected Mr. Pontifex, putting away the study of Percival Ross' countenance and presenting the picture of the Persian to Linda Brooke, with a gallant apology for its imperfections. This done he abandoned his position on the settee and moved towards Francis Howard. Percival Ross barred his path.

"I must insist, sir," he murmured, "on your destroying that sketch or delivering it to me." But the lawyer only smiled tolerantly, and evaded him by a swift manoeuvre.

An ominous snarl distorted Percival Ross' features. Controlling himself determinedly, he regained the lounge and resumed, with Miss Linda Brooke, the conversation so abruptly suspended by the solicitor's artistic propensities.

"What on earth was your object in all that?" whispered Francis Howard as Hugo Pontifex reached the alcove whence his client had been able to overhear the whole of the recent proceedings.

"To bait my trap for your rival," said Mr. Pontifex, in a low voice; "look at the portrait—it is Ross himself. I did not exaggerate when I suggested that it could be identified as Percival Ross by any of his friends, or enemies."

Francis Howard was listening mechanically, his gaze had fixed upon his unconscious neighbours, Linda and Percival Ross.

Screened by a high cabinet and the back of the settee, the mischievous blonde was flirting audaciously.

"You cannot be the only person," argued the solicitor, "who knows him for what he is. He already suspects me and, as I intended, realises the danger of leaving that portrait in my hands. Therefore he will try to get it out of me before I go. He has only to-night for his attempt, which should initiate us into the method by which he deprived you of his confession. What is the matter?" he broke off to ask.

The lieutenant had staggered and gripped at a sweeping curtain for support. Mr. Pontifex glanced over his client's shoulder and perceived that Linda Brooke was archly dangling before the eyes of her companion a golden skein, rippling and elastic. Percival Ross snatched at it and thrust it into his vest-pocket.

The girl rose, with a frown of assumed indignation, and, fluttering her fan of feathers, moved away laughing.

"Curse him," muttered Francis Howard; "you saw that, Pontifex—it is a braid of her hair. I have such another and she gave it me in the same fashion. Oh, Linda, Linda!"

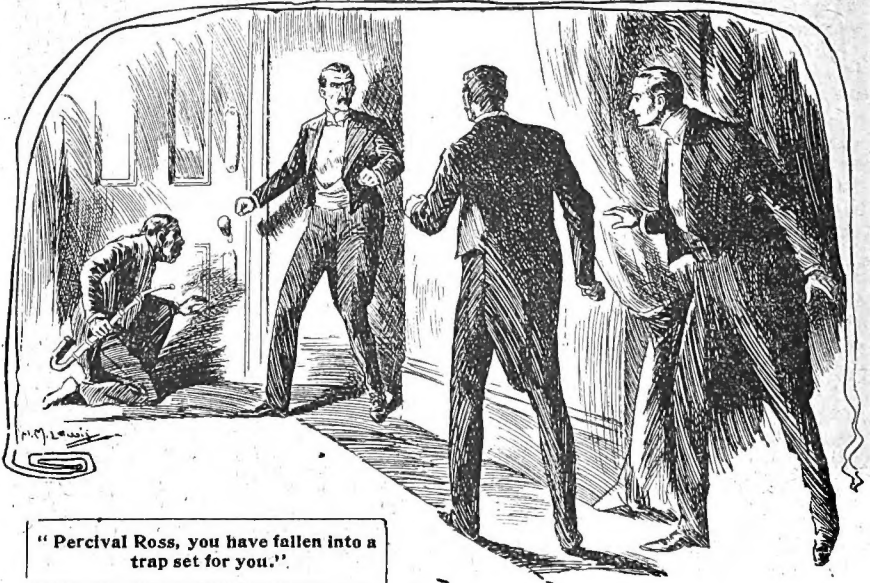
The lieutenant flung himself down in the padded alcove and groaned. Mr. Pontifex regarded him pityingly and strolled out into the drawing-room.

The clock in the hall was striking midnight when the lawyer next spoke to his client. The various members of the house-party were beginning to retire, and Mr. Pontifex had waylaid the young naval officer at the door of the latter's bedchamber.

"Come to my room, unseen, as soon as you can," he instructed softly, "the door at the further end of the passage. It is time to set the trap; Ross went off, ostensibly to turn in, ten minutes ago. Who the dickens is that?"

A short man, spare, stealthy, and brown-skinned, had just gone by along the corridor.

"Ross' valet," said the lieutenant, "a Japanese, and as ugly as his master."



"Percival Ross, you have fallen into a trap set for you."

Hugo Pontifex stepped hurriedly into the speaker's apartment.

"Why didn't you tell me your rival had a Japanese attendant?" he inquired irritably.

"It didn't occur to me," replied Francis Howard, "is it of any significance?"

The lawyer started suddenly, his keen nostrils dilated and he breathed deeply. An instant he stood, absorbed by reflection, then spun on his heel.

"Don't come to my room after all," he ordered, "I will rejoin you here as quickly as possible."

His client stared. "Very well," he said, "you are my superior officer in this business."

Mr. Pontifex put a finger on his lip, and, with an unnecessarily distinct "Good-night," left the chamber. He was positive that almost inaudible footsteps tracked him to his door. Stooping to fumble with the knob, he caught a glimpse of the Japanese disappearing round a shady angle close by. The solicitor waited for five minutes before pushing off his shoes and stealing forth again.

Looking the door on the outside, he took the key and tip-toed down the now darkened passage. He attained

Francis Howard's apartment unobserved, and lowering the light, imposed absolute silence upon the lieutenant.

Half-an-hour elapsed, and then, some slight and evidently anticipated sound striking upon Mr. Pontifex's vigilant ear, he motioned to his client and together they crept along the corridor through the slumbering mansion.

Within sight of the entrance to his chamber, the lawyer touched the lieutenant's arm and they halted. Hidden by the angle in the passage, and aided by the dim illumination of a solitary gas-bracket, they could see that the Japanese valet was kneeling beside the door. Near him stood Percival Ross.

The Japanese was performing a curious process. Occasionally sucking at a wooden pipe he blew the inhaled fumes into Mr. Pontifex's apartment, by applying his lips tightly to a panel at a point, where, the solicitor surmised, a hole had been bored.

"That is the way in which you were hocussed," said Hugo Pontifex, noiselessly, to Francis Howard; "it is an Oriental trick—the Jap is smoking Indian hemp, 'bhang' as he would call the drug. The smoke is strongly narcotic; you must have slept soundly while Ross was calmly pilfering the confession from your letter-case. If our host's bachelor rooms were not small enough, though, to fill with the fumes, the trick would have proved impossible. I spotted the dodge immediately. I sniffed the air of yours (which the odour still tainted) and altered my scheme a trifle. Be on your guard—they're bound to get a surprise when they find the key missing from the inside of the lock. They will be reckoning on twisting the butt-end with a pair of forceps."

He was right. Percival Ross was holding the tool in question, ready to operate upon the fastening of the door when it should be thought prudent. The Japanese relinquished his crouching attitude and his master bent down. "The deuce!" he hissed; "the key isn't in the lock."

Mr. Pontifex sprang clear of the bend in the corridor. "Naturally!" he announced, "since it is in my possession. Percival Ross, you have fallen into a trap set for you."

The man addressed made a ferocious gesture. Hugo Pontifex flashed out a silver whistle and lifted it to his mouth. "A single act of violence," he said, "and we rouse the house. Your game is played to the finish, Ross; for Miss Brooke's sake we will deal more leniently with you than you deserve."

Giving the whistle to the lieutenant, he showed the

baffled "explorer" a fountain-pen and a sheet torn from his note-book. During the enforced pause in his bed-room, the lawyer had had the forethought to write these lines:

I, Percival Ross, confess hereby that I am—and have been for years—a thief and a blackguard, and that my presence in this house is an insult to it. I, therefore, agree to leave England at once, on the undertaking of Mr. H. Pontifex, solicitor, that my true character shall be revealed to no other person than Miss Brooke.

"Sign that," commanded Mr. Pontifex.

Percival Ross clutched at the pen, and, with a frightful oath, obeyed.

"You have a specimen of Miss Brooke's hair," remarked the lawyer; "I will confiscate it, if you please."

His victim fumed, but the solicitor was inflexible; he received the gleaming skein and put it away with the signed page from his note book.

"To-morrow," he said, "you will bid farewell to Pangbourne—you can travel to town with me. That is all, for the present."

The "explorer" and his brown henchman were slinking past, when Mr. Pontifex's eye lighted upon the carved pipe in the fingers of the Japanese.

"Stay," he added, "I will appropriate that little contrivance. It is only fair that robbers should be robbed."

He wrested the instrument from the sullen grasp of the Japanese and motioned him to follow his discomfited employer.

And that is why there lies upon the mantelpiece of Mr. Pontifex's office in St. James' Street a carved wooden pipe and a tress of shining golden hair.

The confession which was signed by Percival Ross did not long remain in the keeping of Lieutenant Howard. He offered chivalrously to burn it on the eventful occasion when, after the "explorer's" departure, he showed it to Miss Linda Brooke. She replied by weeping pathetically, and begging him to preserve it until he could assure her of his forgiveness. Whereat the lieutenant pulled out his matchbox and consumed the document in a twinkling. Linda smiled through her tears, a much relieved young lady.

Upon the lieutenant calling one day, some while after, to settle accounts with Mr. Pontifex, the lawyer offered his client a golden tress. Francis Howard shook his head. "She did not cut it for me," he said, sadly. And he went away without telling Mr. Pontifex, what that gentleman had just read in the MORNING POST, that he was to be married in a month—to Miss Linda herself.





Cupid in California

By OLIVER STRANGE.

It must have been a touch of sardonic humour which prompted the first settlers in their choice of a title, for so far as Nature was concerned, it would have been hard to find a prettier spot in all California, than little Hades.

Perhaps a premonition of the class of men likely to flock there, when the wealth of the surrounding rocks became known, had something to do with the christening of the settlement.

Little Hades had existed as a town—so-called—for some twelve months when the events about to be related occurred, and was not yet civilized, the citizens being, in the words of one of them, "a mighty tough lot."

For this reason, although they themselves commonly substituted a literal translation when alluding to the settlement by name, it was scarcely healthy for a stranger to so presume.

The town itself, consisting for the most part of log shanties, with one or two low brick buildings the most prominent of which was the saloon, occupied the bottom of a gulch, which resembled a huge gash, as though a great red slice had been cut out of the pine-clothed hills.

The one street—dignified by the name—ran straight through the valley, and climbing up, became a mere trail which lost itself in the pines above.

It was at the top of this trail, in the full heat of the afternoon sun, that Miss Angelica Webber paused for breath, before plunging into the cool shadow of the woods.

Ange, as she was familiarly known, was the only child of Old Webber, who kept the saloon before referred to. She was barely eighteen years of age, but her tall figure, handsome face, and lithe step, had already caused considerable trouble among the unmarried section of the community.

"Now I wonder which way those two silly men have gone," she murmured thoughtfully, peering into the recesses of the woods. "I reckon they've come up here to quarrel, and perhaps—" the accent on the word betrayed but little doubt—"it's about me."

Her irresolution was but momentary, and gathering up her short skirts she slid noiselessly into the bushes. After proceeding for about thirty yards, the indistinct murmur of voices reached her from a neighbouring clump of brush. With catlike caution she stole forward over the sound-deadening pine needles, and peeped through. Then she smiled, and slightly blushing, settled herself to listen.

Two men were seated in a little clearing, facing each other. Both were young, and dressed much alike in the rough garments of the diggings. In height and build there was little to choose between them; their hair was similar in colour, but here the resemblance ceased, for one had a clean-shaven, almost plain face, which contrasted strangely with the moustached, handsome, but somewhat dissipated features of the other. The former was Matthew Flynn, and his companion was Richard Hammond, his partner. The first named was speaking when the young girl arrived.

"You see, Dick, it's like this," he was saying. "We've been partners for about five years, and though your ideas as to amusement ain't always mine, we've stuck together."

"That's so," was the reply.

"We've been in some rough places, and had some tightish times, but we've pulled through, and never had a serious difference."

"That's so," repeated Dick, reaching out his hand. His partner grasped it, and continued:

"And then we came to this camp, and strike it pretty rich, and—and—there's a girl."

This time the other only nodded.

"They do say down there," waving a hand towards the gully, "that it lays between us. Now being partners, we can't fight, and—" he stopped helplessly.

Dick laughed lightheartedly at his friend's earnest simplicity.

"I guess we'd better play for first innings, old man," he said, "the loser to keep out of the way until the winner gets his answer."

His tone implied little anxiety as to the result, whether chance favoured him or not, and as he spoke he drew a box and dice from his pocket, articles he was never without.

Mat took the—to him—unfamiliar implement, and rattled the dice thoughtfully.

"Sudden death," said Dick, and Mat threw—seven.

"A poor throw, partner," said his opponent, as, with practised hand, he tilted out the cubes and disclosed sixes.

For some moments Mat gazed silently at the dice, and then he stretched out his hand to the winner, and said:

"Good luck to you, Dick."

The other pressed the hand cordially, and, rising, said laconically:

"Coming down?"

"I reckon I'll stay up here a bit longer," replied Mat, keeping his eyes on the ground.

Dick understood, and went without another word.

"Poor old Mat," he muttered as he climbed down the trail. "He doesn't realise that he has no more chance with the girl, than he had with the dice, against me."

In this self-satisfied reflection he was not altogether right, however, for the man he had left was even at that moment aimlessly tearing up the long grass, and trying to stifle the same thought.

As for the unseen listener, the cause of this singular meeting, she waited until Dick's footsteps had died away, and then a mischievous idea took possession of her mind. She crept back some distance, and then again advanced, purposely making as much noise as possible. As she pushed aside the bushes, and stepped into the clearing, she started back with a little cry of astonishment, well enough done to have deceived a keener wit than a lover's.

At the sight of her Mat rose awkwardly, and the young girl, with a merry smile, bent him a sweeping curtsy.

"Ah! Mr. Flynn," she said, "so I have discovered your secret at last. I know now why we so rarely see you at the saloon."

Mat started, blushed red under the deep bronze of his face, and stammered: "But Ange—I mean Miss Webber—I—I haven't any secret."

The girl looked at him with a quizzical expression, and he tried hard to think. Then she nodded her head very knowingly, and very prettily, to his mind.

"You're a poet, that's what you are," she said slowly.

Mat breathed again, and endeavouring to look consciously shame-faced, said: "Well, you won't give me away, will you?"

"Either it's that, or you're in love," continued his tormentor.

He tried to laugh but made poor work of it, and he stood clumsily fingering his hat like a big schoolboy detected of a fault. Ange watched him curiously for a moment, and then said:

"Well, I must go. If anyone came along they might take us for lovers, only——"

"Only," repeated Mat.

"They would think we were quarrelling," she retorted, as with a mocking laugh she vanished among the trees.

Mat made as though he would follow but stopped short, as the memory of his late compact with Dick crossed his mind.

"It wouldn't be fair to him," he muttered, and flung himself down on the ground again.

As he did so, a voice from the incircling foliage said sweetly:

"Pray don't trouble. I can find my way home

alone, even if I don't meet Dick—I mean Mr. Hammond."

The words brought him to his feet again, but only just in time to see a gleam of white flutter through a distant opening in the woods.

"She called him Dick," he said slowly, as he turned in the direction of the trail.

When he reached the settlement, he found it in a state of expectant excitement, and he noticed that one or two of the miners regarded him in a curious manner.

There were a crowd of loungers outside the saloon, and of one of these he made inquiries.

"Vigilants have nailed a thief, and they're tryin' him," was the reply.

"Who is he, a stranger?" Mat asked indifferently.

"Not much, an' look here, you ain't a particular pal of mine, but if I was you, I'd get out."

Seeing the look of amazement on the face of his questioner, he continued:



The young girl, with a merry smile, made him a sweeping curtsy.

Stetson 1901

"There ain't a chance for him. He was seen to hide some 'stuff' up in the woods a week ago, ready to clear out one night, I reckon, but he's been watched, and this time they caught him in the very act of lifting 'dust' from Denver's shanty, an' he's booked, certain."

"But what has this to do with me?" Mat asked, impatiently.

The other shrugged his shoulders nonchalantly as he replied:

"Nothin', only the thief is your partner."

For a moment Mat glared at the speaker, clenching his hand as though about to strike him to the earth. Then, as the too probable truth of the accusation came home to him, he groaned and staggered away. His informant watched him go, muttering:

"He seems quite surprised. Funny that a man's partner should know less about him than anyone else in the settlement."

The trial did not last long, for in this instance, at least, it was but a formality. The accused recognised it as such, and even tried to shorten the proceedings byocularly announcing his guilt. At length it was over, and the expectant crowd was informed that the hanging would take place early on the following morning, so as not to interfere with the day's work. Little attentions like this cost nothing and make the members of the committee popular.

As soon as it was dark, a man presented himself before the massive log hut which did duty as a gaol, and, after a short colloquy with the armed sentinel at the door, was admitted.

The noise aroused the condemned man, and he rose with a smile to welcome his visitor, whose identity was revealed by a lantern hung in one corner of the shed.

"Mat, old man, this is good."

"Hush!" was the reply. "I've got permission to see you, but time is short. You must change clothes with me, and get out of this."

Dick hesitated a moment, and then said: "But they'll hang you, Mat."

"Dry up!" responded Mat roughly. "I reckon I know what I am doing, and you've got to do as I say, for—her sake. She loves you, and besides, a bargain's a bargain."

The inherent selfishness of Dick's nature, made him give in easily. Silently they effected a change of apparel, and then with a pair of scissors, Mat clipped away the prisoner's moustache.

"Pull your hat down, and hang your head as though you're a good deal cut up, and I reckon you'll pass," he said. "Both horses are ready at the back of the cabin, and there is money in the saddlebags. Try and get her to go with you."

Dick nodded, and with a last handshake, slid through the door and vanished into the darkness. Mat, listening, heard him utter something to the sentinel, and then came silence.

With a sigh of relief, he threw himself down on the rough ground, and lay there thinking. To-morrow morning he would have to take his friend's place under the fatal tree, for he knew that in the eyes of Judge Lynch, his crime was even worse than that of the man he had saved. Thoughts of escape came to him, but he knew that half-a-dozen armed men lay sleeping within a few yards of the gaol.

He was aroused from his reverie by the sound of a low sweet voice outside:

"Now Jake, you will let me speak to him, won't you. You see, the poor fellow's fond of me, and I guess he'd

like to wish me goodbye. I—I'll give you a—a kiss—just to let me go in for a few minutes."

Mat's face flushed, for he recognised the voice.

"She can't have seen him," he muttered. "Thinks he's still here."

There was a short scuffle, a little laugh, and the next moment the door opened and closed. Almost instinctively Mat had blown out his light, so that although his form was visible, his features were sufficiently blotted out. Without a word the girl stepped up to him, and throwing off a long heavy cloak, whipped it over his shoulders. Then she snatched off his hat, and replaced it by the light fleecy shawl from her own dainty head.

"You're taller than me, but if you bend your knees a



"Well, go ahead and hang me, only," and she smiled, "Dad won't use the 'chalk' as freely as I do."

little, I think you can fool Jake. If he tries any more foolishness," he could not see her blushes, "stun him with this," and she slipped a heavy revolver into his hand.

"But you?" he whispered.

"I'll stay here," was the reply. "You don't reckon they'll hang me, do you? Now go at once, and don't forget you are a woman."

She pushed him towards the door, and he caught her hand, but as he stooped to kiss it, he felt a pair of warm, moist, lips on his cheek. He went out, and managed to elude the sentinel, in consequence of that worthy having to make fast the door, before indulging in "foolishness."

* * * * *

Early on the following morning, the sun shone down on a curious scene. The entire population, except the feminine portion, were congregated around the gaol, gazing with mixed feelings and expressions, at the slight girlish form, leaning in the doorway. Near-by stood,

with ashamed face, the late sentinel, in the grasp of two stalwart miners. But for Ange, matters would probably have gone hard with this unlucky victim of her charms.

"I did it alone," she declared, facing them defiantly. "As for him, most of you would have been only too glad to have done what he did, for—for—me."

This was true enough, and many of the younger faces, albeit with grim smiles, looked enviously at the culprit. The girl saw her advantage.

"You've come here to hang," she said. "Well, go ahead, and hang me, only," and she smiled, "dad won't use the 'chalk' as freely as I do."

The overwhelming absurdity of the suggestion, together with the girl's humorous allusion to certain long-standing accounts at the saloon, turned the scale.

Amidst a roar of merriment, Jake was liberated, and the men who had come to kill, remained to laugh.

For the next few days, Mat was distinctly miserable. More certain than ever that Ange loved his partner, he conscientiously avoided her.

He concluded that the fugitive must have missed her on the night of the escape, and would send to her.

One evening, sitting moodily in his cabin, he heard a light step in the door, and looked up to find the subject of his thoughts standing before him.

"Good evening, Mr. Flynn. I've come for the cloak, if you've quite done with it," she said, calmly.

"The cloak?" stammered Mat.

"And there's a shawl, too," she added.

Then an idea came to the bewildered man's assistance.

Of course she would presume that Dick, on escaping, would come to the cabin, and leave the articles there for her.

"I've been very stupid," he said apologetically. "Of course Dick left the things and asked me to give them to you."

She took them, and stepped to the door, which she opened.

"He left them for me, you say?" she queried, with a tremulous little smile.

Mat could only trust himself to nod assent.

"But Dick never had them," she cried and fled.

In a moment Mat was out of the cabin, and by her side, for encumbered with the heavy cloak, she could not run fast, even if she had wished to, which may be doubted.

"Ange! Ange!" he cried. "You knew—you knew—all the time that—" and catching her in his arms, he pressed his lips on the downcast head. Then he remembered his compact with the absent.

"But Dick," he murmured, half-releasing her.

"He had his answer the night he escaped," she whispered softly.

"Poor Dick," Mat said. "He has lost more by his misdeeds than he dreamt of."

Then as he looked down, her eyes answered his unspoken question, and he knew that he was wrong, for a man cannot lose what he has never possessed.

"FINE morning, Donald. What's the day going to be?"

"Weel, I'm thinkin' it'll maybe rain."

"But the barometer is rising, Donald."

"Yes; but it's very little heed the weather hereabouts ays to the barometer."

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THE LION'S WARS



The Zulu War of 1879.

THE exact causes which led to the Zulu War of 1879 are not easily explained.

The proximity of Natal to Zululand, the steps taken by Sir Bartle Frere to save the Transvaal from being overrun by the Zulus, and the award by certain land commissioners on a disputed land claim between the Zulu and the Boer were the main causes.

The question becomes rather more obscure when we consider the relation existing between the two countries when war broke out.

Our position was undoubtedly one of supremacy, for so far back as 1861 we publicly fixed the accession to the Zulu throne.

In 1873 we again nominated the king, taking from him on his accession a declaration that he would rule in all

righteousness, that he would not kill his people unjustly, and that no one should be put to death till he had received a fair trial.

One thing is certain, that we shirked our responsibilities. Ever since 1865 the Zulus had asked us to act as arbitrators in a dispute over the Amaswazi country which both nations claimed.

In the interest of peace, if nothing else, we ought to have accepted the responsibility.

Why did we not do so? Because South Africa at that time was regarded by the Colonial Office as an unmitigated nuisance.

So we did nothing, which of course prompted the Dutch to proclaim their sovereignty over the disputed territory and tax the inhabitants.

Here again we blundered. When Cetewayo, at our request, refrained from attacking the Boers who had seized a large district to the north of the Lydenburg gold fields, we were in a position, as the Boers were in the last stage of bankruptcy, to force them to surrender the territory, to which, it may be observed, they had not the slightest claim.

When we annexed the Transvaal in 1877 by a kind of political necessity, we had, in a measure, to adopt so much of its selfish and ill-omened policy that arbitration was no longer open to us.

Add to this the cry which arose in South Africa that the Zulus, on account of their formidable military organization, ought to be disarmed, and it can easily be seen what a dangerous crisis was at hand.

The outlook grew worse when Cetewayo, who had enacted a law declaring that all maidens who refused to marry his soldiers should be killed, furiously replied to our remonstrances that "he should govern the country as he pleased." To avert a rupture we then decided to proceed with the arbitration. Its terms proved, save one or two minor points, to be very acceptable to the Zulus, but when they learnt that its acceptance carried with it a proviso that they must disband their army of 60,000 men their rage knew no bounds. Cetewayo, even had he been peaceably inclined, dared not agree to our demands, for there was a warlike feeling amongst his young men who since his accession had not "washed their spears."

"Go back and tell the white man this," said the Zulu monarch to the messenger from the Natal government, "that the Governor of Natal and I are equal. He is Governor of Natal and I am Governor here."

Our annexation of the Transvaal, too, had sorely per-

plexed the Zulu monarch. "The Boers are liars and thieves," he declared. "What does the Good White Queen want with such people?"

Sir Bartle Frere, one of the greatest of our Empire-builders, seeing how close we were to war, applied for troops. Again the Colonial Office blundered. They might have assembled in Natal such an imposing array of troops that the Zulus, seeing the futility of resistance, might have backed down. Instead, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who was Colonial Minister at the time, wrote, "Her Majesty's Ministers are not prepared to comply with the request for reinforcements."

The Cabinet must have got wind of the foolishness of Sir Michael, for in November, 1878, they wrote that reinforcements would be sent.

Before these could reach Natal, the thirty days' grace we had given the Zulu king to disarm having expired, all further negotiations were intrusted to Lord Chelmsford, the Commander-in-Chief in South Africa.

War was begun on February, 1879, by our troops crossing the frontier, the enemy everywhere retreating. The only two practical roads into Zululand from Natal were Rorke's Drift and the Lower Tugela.

The reports as to the attitude of the Zulus were so conflicting that after our forces entered Rorke's Drift on February 11th, it was not known whether we should meet a hostile army or a submissive king.

But we were soon to be enlightened. On the 12th, we had a successful fight with the enemy, and burnt the kraal of Strayo. On 21st we encamped at Isandhlana.

In the meantime a body of troops under Colonel Durnford had crossed the Tugela Drift and marched up the left bank of the river to Rorke's Drift.

The next operation was to reconnoitre the country in the neighbourhood of Matyana's stronghold; Major Dartnoll, who was dispatched on this errand, sent word back that the country was strongly occupied by the enemy, and asked for reinforcements. None were sent.

On the 22nd, the major sent another dispatch saying that the enemy were in enormous force. On this Lord Chelmsford sent all the troops at his disposal (which, it should not be forgotten, might have been sufficient to have wiped the Zulus out there and then, had the affairs at the Colonial Office been administered with intelligence) and ordered Colonel Durnford to bring up his native troops from Rorke's Drift to reinforce and defend the camp during his absence with Dartnoll. The moment his lordship reached the front he decided, in the belief that the enemy confronting him were the main body, to attack.

The effort to dislodge them proved entirely successful, and after a sharp encounter the savages retired. We were in hot pursuit when a messenger rode up with the alarming report that firing could be heard to the left of the enemy.

But as nothing unusual could be detected in the camp from a neighbouring hill, Lord Chelmsford was about proceeding when Commandant Lonsdale arrived with the news that the camp was in the hands of the foe.

In other words, as soon as a small body of Zulus had lured the British general to a convenient distance, the main body had swooped down on our camp.

Although the day was far advanced Lord Chelmsford at once gave orders to return. It was night when they arrived, and the men were so worn out, for they had marched thirty miles that day, that finding the camp empty they crept in.

On every side they found traces of a terrible conflict.

What did these men who were without ammunition do? Throw up intrenchments? No! They prowled about turning over the bodies of dead companions in search of food.

Think of it. British soldiers reduced to such straits as this. Soldiers after fasting for forty-eight hours have only one thought, food.

What a night for these poor fellows! What a night for Lord Chelmsford! He had lost all his tents, ammunition, and stores, and he could form no idea as to the enemy's plan.

Suddenly it struck him that the Zulus had invaded Natal. At an early hour the force started for Rorke's Drift.

This post was held by Lieutenant Chard and Lieutenant Bromhead, after the departure of Colonel Durnford with eighty men of the 24th Regiment.

Fortunately, Chard heard from some of the fugitives who had escaped the disaster which had befallen the camp at Isandhlana. While the little force was hard at work throwing up intrenchments the survivors told their sad story.

On the morning of the 22nd the main Zulu army, some 25,000 strong, was about five miles from the camp. It did not intend to fight that day for the "moon was dead," but it quietly surrounded the camp, sitting in full battle array.

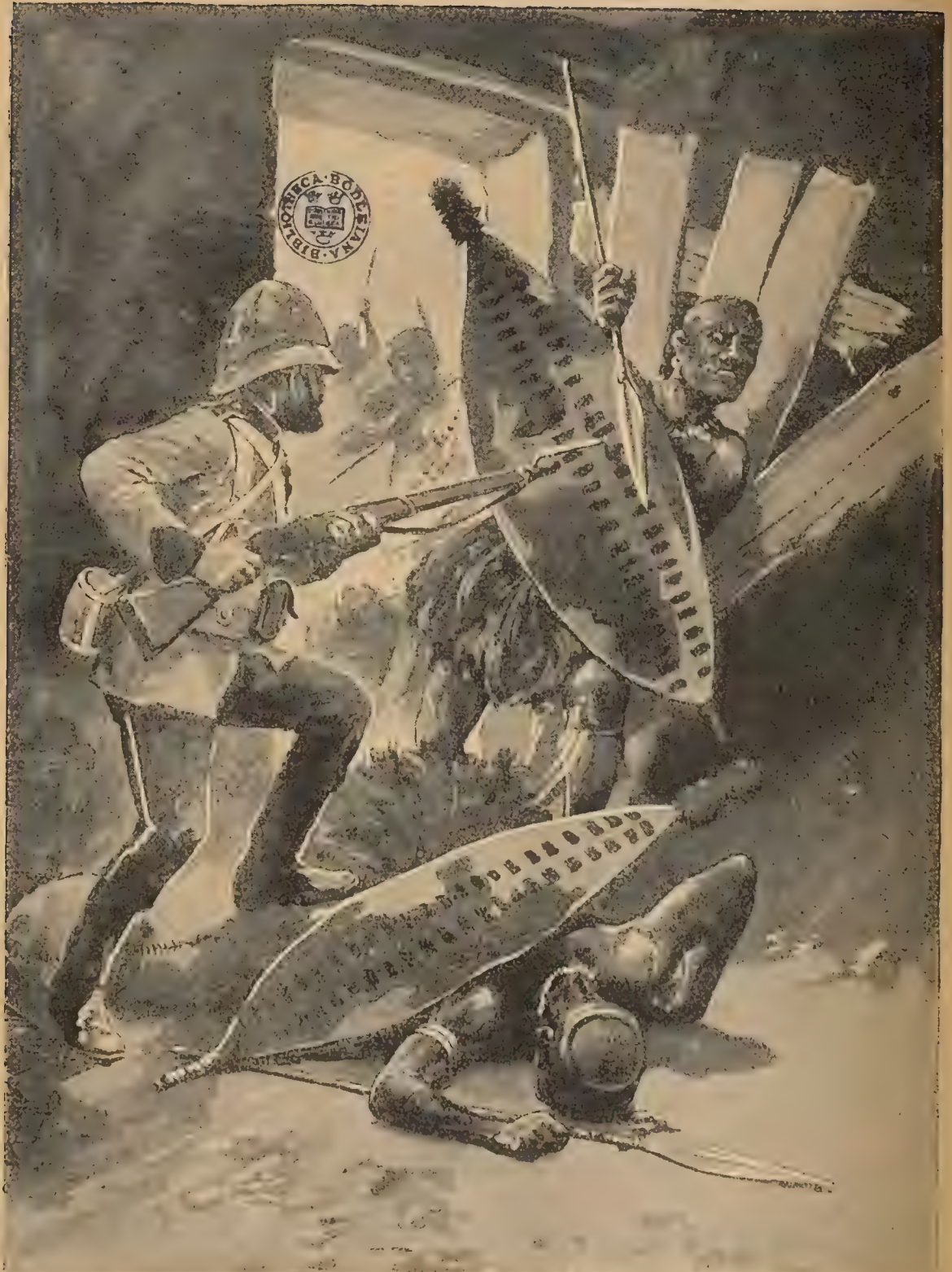
A party of our men sent out to reconnoitre came into contact with the enemy, and fired at them. In an instant the dead moon was forgotten. The two horns, composed of unmarried regiments, rushed, with all the impetuosity of youth, to the attack, and were at once repulsed, but the centre, composed of married men, moved steadily on till they outflanked the British position.

It is impossible to conceive anything more perfect than the outflanking tactics of the Zulus. They taught them to the Boers, who in turn used them successfully against us, till, mastering the secret, we adopted them ourselves. Colonel Durnford, taking the flanking movement to be a retreat, ordered Colonel Pulleine to send his men to meet them. The latter officer, mistrusting the movements of the Zulus, suggested that he should keep his men in reserve in case Durnford's men wanted assistance.

What followed is not rightly known. That Colonel Durnford attacked the Zulus and that he was overcome is certain, but all the rest is mere conjecture. It is probable that on discovering his mistake he tried to regain the camp. One survivor speaks of the Zulus breaking through the ranks, another of an indiscriminate flight through the tents.

The assegais played a deadly part, killing our soldiers as they fled. We hear of our men forming themselves into squares and little groups and resisting desperately till their ammunition failed, and of others who were overwhelmed by repeated charges and showers of assegais. Something has been said of a wounded officer who from a waggon kept scores of Zulus at bay. But we hear of no Britisher, we are glad to say, who begged for mercy.

By the time the Zulus reached Rorke's Drift the little band was prepared to give them a warm reception. The defences were weak, for they had to be improvised. About barricades of flour and biscuit tins there is a most unsubstantial ring. But there were brave Britishers behind these frail defences prepared to fight to the last gasp. By sheer weight of numbers the Zulus managed to get inside the defences, but each time



Drawn by

Hook and his rifle kept them at bay.

[Lawson Wood.]

they were driven out with the most surprising speed at the bayonet's point.

Of all the heroes who distinguished themselves that day Sergeant Hook, V.C., claims our admiration. How many Zulus this brave fellow killed is not actually known. Certainly over twenty, probably thirty. He was making tea for the wounded in the hospital when the alarm was given. Hastily distributing a quantity of cartridges about his person, Hook seized his Martini-Henry, and, adjusting his bayonet, fired on the advancing Zulus through the loopholes in the walls till they reached the hospital, the door of which they broke in. But they did not enter. Hook and his rifle kept them at bay. Those who faced the dauntless man were either shot or bayoneted. Hour after hour passed, and Hook, though wounded, went on calmly killing all who came within reach of his weapon. "If they had once got inside they would have killed all the invalids," said Hook to his officer subsequently, "so I was obliged to keep them out." And he did, till, repulsed on all sides, the Zulus lost heart and disappeared.

The little garrison had hardly ceased cheering when a large force was seen approaching; a thrill of apprehension passed through the troops. Another host of Zulus? No; they were Lord Chelmsford's tired men.

The news of the disaster at Isandhlana created the greatest consternation. Lord Chelmsford was, of course, greatly blamed. It was said he should have instructed Colonel Durnford to laager his wagons when night fell, and have pushed out scouts to prevent a surprise. The camp, too, was pitched on a site absolutely indefensible.

All this may be true, but the one great blot of the war was that it was not fought by mounted infantry.

Had cavalry been engaged Isandhlana would not have passed into the domain of British defeats.

On the day Isandhlana was fought, Colonel Pearson and a small force had engaged 5,000 Zulus ten miles south of Ekowe. Thanks to the Gatling guns, but still more to the superb bravery of the Naval Brigade, we carried the enemy's position and drove them north in the greatest disorder.

Natal, although alarmed for its safety, took every precaution to defeat a Zulu invasion. Volunteers were posted along the Tugela. Troops from Ceylon, and marines from St. Helena were stationed at Durban, Maritzburg, and Ladysmith.

Whether the Zulus were waiting for the full moon to gather in the mealie harvest, or for the Tugela floods to subside, before advancing is not known. Had they crossed the Tugela, nothing could have saved Natal. As they elected to remain quiet the spirits of the colonists began to revive.

The Zulus did not even attack Ekowe, though they were known to be assembled round it in great numbers.

Whilst attention was concentrated on Ekowe, and people were marvelling at the wonders of the heliograph communication, which had just been established, another disaster befel our arms.

A convoy on the road to Luneburg from Derby had halted at the Bombi river to meet a detachment of the 80th regiment, which had been sent for its protection. During the early hours of March 12th, 4,000 Zulus, taking advantage of a dense fog, stole unseen through the long grass in the neighbourhood of the river and creeping noiselessly into the camp slew all the soldiers in their sleep.

When Ekowe, a week later, signalled that she could only hold out a few days longer as the provisions were

exhausted, the gloomiest apprehensions began to be entertained.

The shopkeepers of the towns began to move their goods, and the farmers closed their homesteads and sent their families to Durban.

Much bitterness was caused by the non-arrival of reinforcements from Britain, and there were not wanting those who declared that the mother country had betrayed her trust. The tension was relaxed when troops at last began to trickle in. On the 29th Lord Chelmsford, heading a force of 4,000 British and 2,000 natives, chiefly Basutos, crossed the Tugela.

The greatest precautions were taken to prevent a surprise. During the day the cavalry scoured the surrounding country and at night the camps were intrenched. Great assistance was rendered by the scouts of the famous John Dunn, an Englishman, who, after living with the Zulus many years, had so completely won their confidence that they had made him a chief.

The military authorities were a little suspicious of this remarkable man at first, but he and his scouts soon proved their worth.

John Dunn told Lord Chelmsford how to beat the Zulus, and as his lordship was wise enough to take the advice we scored a great success in our next battle.

On the night of April 1st, our troops encamped at Gingihloo. Before dawn the Zulus had stealthily gathered round the camp, hoping to surprise us at day-break. Colonel Parsons at Ekowe was, however, on the watch, and, as soon as the dusky horde had passed his tower, he flashed signals of their approach.

John Dunn had taught his old friends the use of firearms, but the savages relied more on their assegais. Advancing with the utmost daring, they endeavoured to get to close quarters, but their great rush was the signal for a torrent of lead from Gatling and rifle which brought the charge to a standstill.

Again and again they renewed the attack, but the hail of bullets was so great that they never got near enough to use their favourite weapon.

Full of resource, these born warriors then divided their forces, one column attacking us on the right whilst another assailed the rear. But they had to do with troops, who, although liable, owing to their reckless bravery, to be taken by surprise, had never yet been forced from a position they had taken up.

For two hours the Zulu wave surged to and fro. Then came one mighty rush. It was a gallant effort, but the leaden hail was too fierce, and the enemy broke and fled, pursued by the cavalry and native troops. The Zulu loss was over 1,600, ours about a dozen.

The joy of Ekowe when the relief party hove in sight was as great as that experienced by Ladysmith when Lord Dunlop's troopers galloped into the town.

Matters had gone better with the force under Colonel Wood, who at the outset of the campaign had moved into Zululand from Utrecht in the Transvaal. On January 24th he had engaged 4,000 of the enemy at Intamba mountain, and won a victory. On hearing of the disaster at Isandhlana, Wood moved towards Bagulisini kraal, and later, on March 28th, captured Hiobani, Umbelini's mountain stronghold. On the return journey they encountered the Zulu impi. We had been trapped. It cost Wood 70 men and all the cattle he had captured to extricate himself, but he broke through at last and retreated to Kambula where he at once entrenched himself.

He was only just in time, for the spades were still hard at work when 20,000 Zulus hove in sight. Kambula was one of the most desperately contested battles of the war. It lasted four hours and till the very last the result was doubtful. At one time the camp was broken into in no fewer than seven places, but the troops never wavered. If they had broken through in twenty places it would have been all the same. They would have to be got out.

Still, at one time our chances looked so bad that the native troops began to desert. The critical moment passed, and in the end the stolid, dogged valour of the British infantryman prevailed.

Bishop Colenso, backed by a little England party at home, did their best at this juncture to bring the war to a conclusion, but without success, which was fortunate, for after Kambula the tide of battle turned.

All the reinforcements from England having arrived, Lord Chelmsford, on April 15th, resumed operations. His lordship's task was terribly difficult, owing to the absence of roads impeding the transport. The country about Rorke's Drift being too rough even for the Cape waggons, a long circuit was made by way of Kopje Allein, where the country was tolerably open. The general anxieties were further increased by the menacing attitude of the Boers.

Though these ungrateful people well knew that but for our intervention they would have been exterminated by the Zulus, they actually contemplated attacking us. Lord Chelmsford's force consequently was weakened by the necessity of detaching a force to keep the Transvaalers in check.

In all, 20,000 troops were engaged in the new campaign, in addition to 4,500 Colonials.

On June 2nd the Prince Imperial of France, who had joined our Army, was sent to the front to examine the line of march.

Having passed the Itilezi Hill the little band dismounted, and were partaking of their mid-day meal when a party of Zulus, creeping through the long tambuki grass, burst on the party. In the massacre which followed the Prince Imperial lost his life.

On July 4th, Colonel Wood having joined, the whole army advanced towards Ulundi. Anticipating attack Lord Chelmsford formed all his available men, not exceeding 4,500, into a hollow square. Against this living rampart 20,000 Zulus rushed with all their old intrepidity. After a fight which did not last half-an-hour the enemy fled leaving behind them over 1,000 dead warriors. Our loss was ten.

This defeat so cowed the Zulus that after the submission of the chiefs, Lord Gifford had no difficulty in capturing the deserted king, who, as is well known, was subsequently brought to this country.

The battle of Ulundi ended the Zulu war.

[Next Week: The First and Second Afghan Wars.]

"WHAT do you think of a friend who would not venture to plunge into a river for you when you were drowning?" asked the sentimental member of the club.

"I should say," replied Spicer, "that his friendship was all on the surface."

MRS. NEWWIFE: "I feel sure that Alfred will bring me a lovely present from the City to-day."

MISS CONFIDANT: "An anniversary or birthday, dear?"

MRS. NEWWIFE: "Oh, dear, no! But we had a dreadful quarrel this morning."

Short Stories That Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 ls. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Guilty Gold," by Headon Hill, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source must be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, April 15th. Post-cards only, please. The prize of One Guinea has been awarded this week to Mr. Arthur Wilson, of "Spring Close," Lenton, Nottingham, whose contribution is denoted by a star thus *.

ADMIRING FRIEND: "What makes you think your discovery was so great a success?"

Professor: "Why, as soon as I announced the idea every savant in Europe remembered that he had known of it since he cut his first tooth."

HURLY: "We always hang Uncle John's pictures in a prominent place. He's an artist, you know."

Burly: "A good one, I suppose?"

Hurly: "No, indeed. He doesn't know the first thing about painting."

Burly: "Then why——?"

Hurly: "Oh, he's very wealthy, and my wife expects to become his heiress."

MRS. EDITOR: "John, I want to ask you——"

Mr. Editor (testily): "Oh, you ask too many questions altogether. What do you want now?"

"I wanted to ask you what the title of your last article in the BOOM MAGAZINE was. Mrs. Brown read it and said it was perfect."

"That article? Oh, it was 'Don't be afraid to ask questions.'"

* THE other day a man entered a certain tavern in Nottingham and asked for a can of Nottingham beer. The barmaid said:

"We keep nothing else but Nottingham beer here."

"That's right," said the man, and he took a good drink, then he remarked:

"My word! it don't taste extra grand. I shouldn't be surprised if there was some arsenic in this."

"I know better," replied the girl, "it's been paralysed by three anarchists."

HER lip quivered and her breath came in laboured gasps, but she did not speak.

"Do you not love me?" he anxiously demanded, seizing her shrinking hand.

"I—I don't know," she faltered.

Gently he insinuated his arm about her.

"Darling," he murmured, "would you like to have me ask your mamma first?"

With a sudden cry of terror she grasped his arm.

"No, no, no!" she shrieked convulsively. "She is a widow; I want you myself."

She clung to him until he solemnly promised that he would say nothing to the old lady for the present.

NEW BOARDER (shivering): "This stove is too small for this room."

Landlady (kindly): "So it is. I'll have it moved into a smaller room for you."

JOHNNY: "Pa, what's the difference between cannibals and other folks?"

Pa: "Cannibals, my son, eat their enemies; other people generally go no further than to live on their friends and relatives."

"Now," said the physician, who is noted for his heavy charges, "I must take your temperature."

"All right," responded the patient in a tone of utter resignation. "You have got about everything else I own. There's no reason why you should not take that too."

GREATHEART: "And you saw him insult a woman, and didn't knock him down?"

Littlesole: "What! Strike a man in the presence of a lady?"

Greatheart: "Lady! What lady?"

Littlesole: "Why, the lady he was insulting."

"BLITHERBY's restaurant has the slowest service I ever saw," said the Gentleman with the Gloomy Brow.

"How's that?" asked the Individual with the Over-worked Smile.

"I ordered some eggs there once, and I had to wait so long that they brought me——"

"Chickens?"

"No. Eggs that had been laid by the chickens hatched from the eggs I had ordered."

SOME time ago while I was trading in a village store one of the clerks came to the junior partner, who was waiting on me, and said:

"Please step to the desk. Pat Flynn wants to settle his account and wants a receipt."

The merchant was evidently annoyed.

"Why, what does he want with a receipt?" he said; "we never give one. Simply cross his account off the book; that is receipt enough."

"So I told him," answered the clerk, "but he is not satisfied. You had better see him."

So the proprietor stepped to the desk, and, after greeting Pat with a "Good morning," said:

"You want to settle your bill, do you?"

Pat replied in the affirmative.

"Well," said the merchant, "there is no need for me to give you a receipt. See! I will cross your account off the book," and suiting the action to the word, he drew his pencil diagonally across the account. "That is a good receipt."

"And do you mane that that settles it?" exclaimed Pat.

"That settles it," said the merchant.

"And ye're sure ye'll never be askin' me for it again?"

"We'll never ask you for it again," said the merchant decidedly.

"Faith, thin," said Pat, "I'll be after kapin' me money in me pocket, for I haven't paid it."

"Oh, well, I can rub that out!"

"Faith, now, and I thought the same," said Pat.

It is needless to add that Pat got his receipt.

HE: "What can I do to make you happy?"

SHE: "Do without."

HE: "Without what?"

SHE: "Me."

HE (contritely): "Are you angry?"

SHE (firmly): "Yes, I am."

HE: "Because I kissed you?"

SHE: "Be-because you stopped." [No cards.]

FOGGS: "It is said that a man once addicted to a vice can never really give it up."

TROTTER: "I believe it, too. I know a gambler who is reformed, but every day he plays solitaire and bets with himself that he'll win."

A FRIEND of mine has a little boy who has just reached the age when he is interesting. The other afternoon he was found sitting on the steps of the verandah looking very much downcast, and his mother asked him what the trouble was.

"We'll have to move away from here," he said.

"Why?" asked his mother.

"Oh, I've fought every kid in the street, and there ain't any more fun here."

A PROFESSOR of logic, who was not particularly lucid in his lectures, was on one occasion endeavouring to substantiate that "an article remains the same notwithstanding the substitution of some of its parts."

A young student held up a knife and inquired:

"Suppose I should lose the blade of this knife and should get another one made and inserted in its place, would it be the same knife as it was before?"

"To be sure," replied the professor.

"Well, then," the student went on, "suppose I should lose the handle and get another, would it be the same knife still?"

"Of course," the professor again replied.

"But if somebody should find the old blade and the old handle, and should put them together, what knife would that be?"

The professor's answer is not recorded.

THE auctioneer at a horse sale was trying to dispose of a poor broken-down hack, which seemed to have seen the last of its working days. But Mr. Hammer considered it his duty to extol the merits of whatever was intrusted to him for sale, and so to get the best price possible. So he asked:

"Does any gentleman bid £30 for this valuable horse?"

A bystander offered thirty shillings.

"Oh! gentlemen," protested the auctioneer, "that is really absurd. Only thirty shillings offered for an animal like this! Why, only the day before yesterday, it did its two miles in six minutes!"

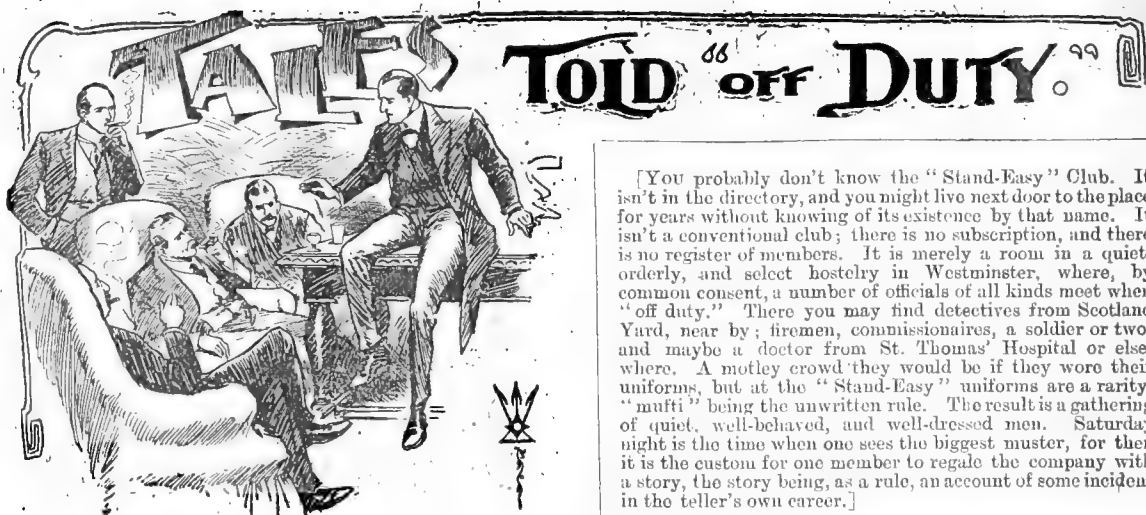
But no other bid was made, and the horse was knocked down for thirty shillings. The purchaser soon found that, instead of doing two miles in six minutes, it looked more like doing two miles in six days. He returned to the sale ring furious.

"What made you say this brute had done two miles in six minutes?"

"But so it did," said the auctioneer, "the day before yesterday."

"And where, may I ask, did this wonderful performance take place?"

"In a railway train," said Mr. Hammer, smiling.



[You probably don't know the "Stand-Easy" Club. It isn't in the directory, and you might live next door to the place for years without knowing of its existence by that name. It isn't a conventional club; there is no subscription, and there is no register of members. It is merely a room in a quiet, orderly, and select hostelry in Westminster, where, by common consent, a number of officials of all kinds meet when "off duty." There you may find detectives from Scotland Yard, near by; firemen, commissioners, a soldier or two, and maybe a doctor from St. Thomas' Hospital or elsewhere. A motley crowd they would be if they wore their uniforms, but at the "Stand-Easy" uniforms are a rarity, "mufti" being the unwritten rule. The result is a gathering of quiet, well-behaved, and well-dressed men. Saturday night is the time when one sees the biggest muster, for then it is the custom for one member to regale the company with a story, the story being, as a rule, an account of some incident in the teller's own career.]

Mad Mortimer's Daughter.

Told by the FIREMAN.

"WELL," said Trebilco; Jack Trebilco, the hero of a hundred fires in and around the great city, "when a fire gets real grip and hold of a building in which are human beings, you may look for something to happen in the shape of excitement and adventure, such as no other calling or duty affords."

"Your life's been pretty well full of the very best brand of that sort of stuff," remarked Sergeant Major Tarrant, "hasn't it Jack?"

"Oh! I don't know! I've seen a bit, I suppose, same as others."

"Then you won't have any difficulty," said I quickly, "in finding something to tell us worth hearing?"

There is nothing vain or conceited about Jack, he being one of the old Sergeant's School, as modest as they make them.

"I'm not a good hand at yarn spinning," he said, settling himself comfortably on a corner of the table facing our little circle, "but anyway, I'll do my best."

"What's it about?" interrupted Martin Cuffe.

"Oh! you'll see by-and-bye; but I call it 'Mad Mortimer's Daughter.'"

"Ah!" said old Martin, rubbing his hands, "that sounds lively! Go ahead Jack!"

"It all happened while I was stationed over Old Kent Road way; or rather, between that and the Walworth Road.

"It's a perfect network of small, mean, dirty streets thereabouts; the houses being, most of them, old, rotten, and from the Brigade point of view, at least, dangerously inflammable.

"Under these circumstances fires in the neighbourhood are both frequent and destructive; and speaking for myself, for nights in succession I haven't had my clothes off.

"There is a certain street that runs from near the 'Elephant' end of the Walworth Road to the 'Paragon' in the Old Kent Road.

"The 'Paragon,' as every Surrey-sider knows, is a big block of model dwellings on the right hand side of the latter; one of the first of the kind ever built, and a little way beyond the Elephant and Castle Station of the Chatham and Dover railway. Some little distance up Castle Street is another and newer block of a slightly inferior class.

"Here lived for many years, up to the summer before last, old Dave Mortimer and his daughter Kate. Mrs. Mortimer, Dave's wife, was long dead, Kate now acting as housekeeper to about the crankiest, most cantankerous old rascal to be found anywhere.

"How I came to know Kate Mortimer was like this: 'The wife of one of our married chaps was taken ill (went off her head, in fact, after the birth of her baby), and had to be sent away from home for some months.

"Poor Goss was at his wit's end as to what to do with the little one.

"Let Katie Mortimer have it," said the Superintendent. 'I know her; and she'll be just delighted to look after the kid 'till your missus is all right again.'

"No sooner said than done. Goss called within the hour at Castle Buildings, and saw the girl, who came round the same evening to fetch the baby.

"Some people, perhaps, mightn't have called her pretty, or even good-looking; but I liked the look of her. I was cleaning and polishing a 'steamer' when she came in, and as I saw her through the glass partition, sitting in the Superintendent's room with the child in her arms, crowing to and smiling at it till it was purple in the face with excited satisfaction, I said to myself, 'that's the girl for me.'

"Her father, old Dave Mortimer, was a well-known character in South London.

"There was no secret about his mode of life; there couldn't very well be; for the misery wrought by him in his dealings with poor folk, made him to be, I think, the best hated man from Newington Butts to New Cross. He was a terror.

"And yet he was a necessity in a way.

"There is a class of people, who, living as they do from hand to mouth, are continually in sore straits for a little ready money for the purchase of stock, etc. This they generally procure from such as old Mortimer, and when once in Shylock's clutches, it is all up with them, for in nine cases out of ten, they never manage to get free again.

"It has always been a wonder to me, how such a miserable, mean, cruel-minded old curmudgeon could ever have had a daughter like Kate: for the two were as unlike in mind and body, as darkness is to light.

"It was said that the old money-lender had a grudge against our station people, because none of us would deal with him. But even had we wished to do so, we could not, as it was against the rules of the Brigade.

"Fortunately he was out when Goss called to see his daughter, so that until the child was actually in the house he was altogether ignorant of the transaction.

"How Kate managed the matter, I didn't know for ever so long, till—in fact, we walked out together; even then she kept something back, for she always shied when I approached the subject.

"When the old man heard, which he soon did, that his daughter had taken unto herself a sweetheart, and that, too, the man was a fireman, he raved like a mad-man.

"That he was at all times mad to a certain extent, I fully believe; or he wouldn't have acted as he did.

"I met him accidentally one morning just by St. George's Church.

"'Here! you!' he cried, coming closer up to me and putting his face into mine almost, 'I want you to understand that my girl's not for you! D'ye hear! Not for you!'

"I didn't want to offend him, of course, so I just tried to comb him down quietly.

"'Will you let me come and talk it over with you, Mr. Mortimer?' I said. 'Perhaps I shall be able to convince you that a fireman isn't necessarily a bad lot.'

"'No! Keep away! Don't come near my place! If you do, I'll shut the door in your face—I will! Now, you know.'

"What could I say? I thought it best to say nothing, and so I left him, making motions after me like some huge ape, as I passed up the High Street towards the 'Elephant.'

"My girl, mind you, was not deceitful. She never concealed from her father that she cared for me, and that she periodically met me and went out with me. She was not afraid of him, it was he who was afraid of her. His shady tricks to get more than his pound of flesh sickened her, and she often told me, in moments of confidence, that she never meant to touch one farthing of anything that he might leave behind him.

"There was one peculiarity with regard to our meetings, viz.:—that there was always a third party present in the person of little Nannie Goss.

"Kate knew her father too well to leave the child behind to his tender mercies; and as I had no objection to its presence, poor little mite! she just wrapped it up warmly, and brought it along.

"The love nonsense that was exchanged over that small head was enough to have charmed away every symptom of hair from off it for ever; for Kitty and I were only like to others in similar cases, and—made two fools of ourselves.

"Possibly, had certain things not then occurred, we should have quietly married one fine morning (first giving the old man fair and due notice of our intention); but it took a long time for the course of our love to run smooth.

"Whether Dave Mortimer became unduly irritable and sullen; owing to business disappointments; or whether it was that the presence of Goss' little one annoyed him, and rubbed him the wrong way, I can't say; I only know that from a certain date, that is after the child had been in Kate's keeping about three months, he left no stone unturned that might make his daughter's life a misery to her.



"'Here! you!' he cried, coming closer up to me and putting his face into mine almost, 'I want you to understand that my girl's not for you! D'ye hear! Not for you!'

"It could not have been because there was any extra expense put upon him by reason of Nannie's temporary residence under his roof, for Goss, though Kate was dead against his doing so, insisted upon paying all out-of-pocket expenses.

"I'm inclined to think that it was a combination of unpleasant circumstances that influenced Dave to persecute Kate at this time, as he undoubtedly did. Sometimes he would, so she tearfully told me, be downright savage in voice and manner; and then she would snatch up the child, run round to the station, and sit for an hour with the Superintendent's wife in the hope that it would blow over.

"I well remember one such occasion, more especially as it immediately preceded that other event, which has cast a shadow on Kate's life, that nothing will ever quite clear away.

"Goss had told me in the morning that his missus was rapidly getting better, and that he hoped to have her home again in a fortnight.

"About six o'clock in the evening I was standing at the open station door, smoking an after-tea pipe, when looking up the street, I saw a woman flying towards me with a baby in her arms. She was without either hat or jacket, and was evidently breathless from agitation and haste.

"It was Katie!

"What's up?" I said, as she turned in, panting at the door.

"Oh, Jack. Father—he nearly killed little Nannie just now! He threw the lamp at her as she lay on the chair-bedstead!—and—it's a mercy that it wasn't alight!"

"The old villain!" I couldn't help saying. "But, there, Kitty! I mustn't speak my mind, I suppose as he's your father. Never worry yourself, dear! come into Mrs. Zunts' room!"

"I imagine that she must have sat there an hour; and it was agreed between herself and Goss, that, if on her return she found her father to be still implacable, she should bring the child round and let Mrs. Zunts look after it for the few days remaining.

"So, then, it was settled; and I myself accompanied the two back to Castle Buildings.

"Cheer up, dear!" I said, as hopefully as I could, 'things are never so bad that they mayn't be worse.'

"As I went away, though, I felt far from easy; but what could I do? As yet I had no right to interfere beyond the right of affection, and that isn't, unfortunately, a legal quantity. I could only watch, and stand ready to chip in when the need came.

"It was really my 'turn-in' at the station that night, but somehow I had no desire for sleep. I was fidgety without being able to give myself any reason.

"Hullo! Jack! aren't you going to bed?" said the Superintendent to me about 11.30.

"No!" said I. 'I couldn't rest if I did. Fact is, sir, I'm uneasy about Katie and the kid. That old black-guard is up to some mischief, I'm convinced, and—and—well, I'll just hang around, in case of anything wrong.'

"Oh! all right! I don't suppose Blake (the night watchman), will object, it'll be company for him. Good-night!"

"At twenty minutes past twelve it was that the alarm sounded.

"Outbreak in Castle Street, Old Kent Road."

"Like a lunatic I hurried up the men, and did more than my share in harnessing and getting under-weigh.

"Within almost record time of the 'call,' we turned out, and dashed at headlong speed in the direction of the 'flare.'

"One word, and one only burst into my brain—'Katie!—Katie!—Katie!'

"Oh, Heavens! if harm should happen to her! and through that old reprobate. I would kill him!

"As the 'steamer' raced through the nearly-deserted streets, I could see by the dull, red, angry glow, that it was no child's play we were in for—that the fire was a serious one.

"We were not as yet absolutely certain that it was Castle Buildings that was ablaze; that confirmation of

my worst fears only came with our turning into the street itself.

"The Superintendent—Heaven bless him!—knew the mental agony I was enduring, and made large allowance for it.

"When all doubt was at an end (though, strange to say, I had been sure all along), of the fire's locality, he just let me work my own way; knowing that my very anxiety, my love for Katie, would make me to do the right thing.

"Forcing our way through the packed crowd (where all the people came from is a mystery), we at last succeeded in joining two other 'steamers' from Southwark and New Cross, and quickly got to work.

"Of course, Southwark, being headquarters, the people



"How I discovered Katie I shall never really know. I had her in my arms. I cared for nothing else."

from there had all the say; but right or wrong, I didn't care for anybody, and from first to last that night I worked on my own.

"The street is a narrow one, and the houses on both sides of the way are of five and six stories.

"Castle Buildings, which are on the right, are the higher, and from structural arrangements (an area with tall railings in front) are more difficult of scaling in times of danger.

"The Mortimers lived, as I have said, on the third floor—Kate's bedroom facing the street—the sitting-room looking into the court-yard at the back.

"The fire seemed to be confined to the third floor, although, naturally, the danger was (even in a professedly fire-proof building) that it would spread upwards.

"I soon learnt that the inmates were still within, and the knowledge drove me almost to desperation. I did not hesitate a second; but at once made for the common stairway.

"Another fireman followed to help, but—a bit savagely I fear—I told him to 'Go back!' adding with a shout: 'This is my work.'

"Half-way up I was stopped for a minute by the choking smoke that rolled in dense black clouds down the well of the staircase.

"Getting out a piece of linen rag—such as I always carry—I stooped and soaked it in the water that was already rushing in streams down the stone steps. This I placed over my mouth, holding it there with one hand, and charged through the smoke again.

"It was a case of feeling for the outer door of the flat I sought, though I was in a measure guided by my intimate knowledge of its position.

"I know, of course, that it is bad to let in air upon a raging fire, but I was determined at any risk to get my darling out. I therefore hacked away with my hatchet until I drove the lock panel in, when, with a crash, the door fell inwards.

"It was literally an oven of fire!

"The smell of paraffin was everywhere, telling its own tale.

"I did not shout or cry out, though I restrained myself with difficulty; for I knew that anyone inside would be rendered unconscious by smoke fumes, and so unable to hear anything.

"How I discovered Katie I shall never really know. I had her in my arms. I cared for nothing else.

"I speedily found that the way I had come was now irretrievably blocked; that through the window into the street was my only chance to get to safety with my precious burden.

"Though rapidly becoming weaker from the effects of smoke and heat, I could distinctly hear the rattle of the escape as it was being adjusted outside.

"I dragged myself to the window, the framework of which was a mass of glowing wood.

"I think it must have been the air through the window that roused Katie, for just as I was putting her into the 'canvas,' she managed to cry: 'The baby!—Nannie!—on the bed!'

That kid is perhaps playing at this minute round at the station at hide-and-seek among the wheels of the 'steamer' and the 'hose cart,' but she will never know, poor little soul! how near to death she was that night when I caught her up and staggered to the window with her.

"At that moment, too, as if to make my situation the more perilous, a large piece of coping came crashing down from above upon the escape, striking it mid-way. Like a reed it parted, the upper portion thundering down to the ground.

"'Jack! Jack!' shouted the Superintendent between his hands from below. 'I've got the sheet ready! You must jump!'

"In less time than it takes to tell it the wrecked escape was cleared away, and a dozen men were at the sheet.

"I dropped down the child first, as tenderly as I could; waited a second for them to remove her, and then sprang into space.

"Where was old Dave? Why did I not strive to save him?

"Well, you must have a very poor opinion of me,

mates, if you think as I'd leave my worst enemy to perish, if it were in any way possible for me to rescue him.

"No, I ought to have said that the very first object over which I stumbled across the shattered front door was the blackened body of Dave Mortimer.

"Living, I should have given him of my best—for humanity's sake—but dead! I left him, for I could do nothing for him; and—there were lives to be saved.

"Neither Katie nor little Nannie were seriously the worse for all they went through, although my girl's tender heart is to this day clouded, every now and again, with the shadow of it all.

"We have a little one of our own now, and Nannie is, by self-appointment, the fairy godmother.

"The origin of the fire was easily traceable to the soaked bedclothes, from the thrown lamp of an hour or two before, and a subsequent dropping upon them of a lighted match, or something similar."

"Bravo! bravo! my boy!" cried Sergeant Tarrant. "You deserve all the happiness you've got; and—and I'd like to see your missus, and tell her so—there."

WHO KILLED . . . JAMES TRENT?

The Editor of "Pearson's Weekly" knows, or thinks he knows, of five distinct ways in which he might kill a man, and never be found out. James Trent was killed in one of these ways. "Pearson's Weekly" will give you £100 if you can find out how James Trent was killed and who killed him.

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NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOURS.

—:—

A Seaside Sketch.

—:—



ALTHOUGH I had no idea who she was, it was impossible to help being interested in her.

In the first place, our balconies joined, and, somehow or other, every time I thought I should like to see what sort of a night it was, she seemed struck with the same idea; and I could never go out of my long French window without being perfectly certain that I should see her in her sweeping black dress, heavily trimmed

with crape, gazing, with tear-dewed eyes, at the lovely moonlight scene before her.

Then there was most certainly an air of mystery about her that was most tantalising. She could not be a widow, because she had no wedding ring; she could not be an orphan, because her father and mother were, at times, visible or audible.

No other relation's loss could possibly have affected her as this loss seemed to have done; and I had reluctantly come to the conclusion that she must be mourning over the untimely fate of her *fiancé*, when a most curious and unforeseen circumstance suddenly gave me the required clue to her state of depression and misery, and put it in my power to do her a service that has rendered her, she declares, my grateful friend and—well, something else, into which we need not enter at present, until her life's end.

I had come down to Southcove to recover my health, after a long and serious illness, brought on by overstudy and grief at the sudden death of one of my most intimate college friends—a friend who had been far more to me than any one of my relations had ever been, and with whom I had lived with that perfect accord that is very rarely witnessed in this world of ours. We had often talked over the mysteries of life, and the still greater mysteries of death; and the very day on which Brian Ormonde had gone out of my rooms for that fatal ride, he and I had laughingly promised each other that, whoever died first, would do his best to revisit the earth, and in some way or other would communicate with the survivor.

For weeks I had expected Brian to visit me. I had sat up at nights, with my windows open, imploring, praying him to come in, if but for an instant, to assure me of his existence in another world. I had sat silent, almost breathlessly listening for his whisper, or his footfall on my staircase. I had commanded, besought, ordered him to redeem his promise; but not one sign, not one token, was vouchsafed to break the sudden silence that fell between us on that awful afternoon.

The strain, coming as it did after long days and nights of severe reading, was too much for me and I fell desperately ill; and as soon as I was on the way to recovery, and change was suggested, suddenly I remembered Southcove, and determined to regain my lost strength in a place that Ormonde and I had often enough talked of visiting, and, somehow or other, had never been able to go to in any of our outings.

Of course, doctor, mother, sisters, and all objected

strongly to Southcove; anything that reminded me of Brian must be bad for me. Southcove was dull, it was damp, it was lonely. Let me try Bournemouth or Brighton; anywhere except the one place that I, with the perversity of a convalescent, determined was the only spot on earth where I should have the rest and peace I felt positively necessary to my well being.

Besides this, a mysterious certainty arose in my breast that in my illness, when naturally the blank wall erected by the flesh between the spirit and the outer world had been rendered less dense than usual by my sufferings, I had had some communication with Brian after all. I felt positive that he had come to me, and had whispered Southcove three distinct times. And though, of course, I kept this notion to myself, for fear of being considered a lunatic, the stronger I got the more determined I was to have my own way; and, finally, I set out for Southcove quite alone, reaching it just three months after the day on which all that was mortal of Brian Ormonde had been committed to the earth from which he sprang.

Southcove was undoubtedly a dull place, possessing few, if any, attractions to the ordinary tourist; and, until I discovered the presence of my next-door neighbour, I almost wished I had not been quite so obstinate in my two purposes of visiting Southcove and visiting it alone; for beyond strolling down to the wretched little wooden pier, and gazing for a steamer that never came in, and ransacking the small circulating library for novels, there was literally nothing whatever to do.

Still, the library was most certainly an endless source of entertainment, owing to the peculiar collection of volumes to be found therein.

There were books long since forgotten by all save the writers; there were efforts of local geniuses, stung to desperation by the dulness of the place into evoking a little wild adventure out of their inner consciousness; and there were battered and worn out copies of all sorts of favourite books, marked all over by the appreciative pencils of visitors, who had been obliged to find some vent for their superfluous energies in making remarks, opprobrious and otherwise—first on the volumes themselves, and afterwards on the remarks of those who had gone before them—until I almost felt obliged to follow their evil example, and, in sheer despair, add the emphatic "fool" or "idiot" that I felt trembled on my pencil. One afternoon it had all at once occurred to me that I had a long evening before me, and that, having concluded as much as remained of the third volume of a most thrilling narrative all about smugglers who had lived in and round Southcove, whose doings certainly did not redound to the credit of the place, I should be reduced to despair or original composition if I did not arm myself with another store of reading.

So I put on my hat, and made for the library, considerably hastening my steps when I perceived that a storm was brewing, and that we had possibly before us one of those south-westerly gales that are certainly seen to perfection in Southcove, if nowhere else. When I reached the little emporium—not for worlds would I

shock the Misses Brown's feelings by calling it a shop—I met my fair unknown just emerging from it, carrying quite a stock of literature. She, too, patronised the library then. Well, perhaps Miss Mary Brown, who wore curls, and had once been engaged, could tell me her name if nothing else.

"Good afternoon, Miss Brown," I remarked airily; "I've come to change my books."

"You're in luck's way this afternoon," answered she with a smile. "Miss Neville has just brought back the very best book in the library. She told me she hoped she had not spoilt it, but it was so moving, she could not help shedding tears over it."

"Never you mind, miss," I replied, 'tears on the pages of books are like hall marks on silver. I shan't have to recommend it now; it will most certainly speak for itself.'"

"This is all, I suppose?" I asked carelessly, taking up a small pile of books on the counter that remained just where Miss Neville had put them. "Well, I'll try them, Miss Mary. I expect Miss Neville's tears will be quite as eloquent as any of the pencil-marks in the 'Jolly Buccaneer.' By the way, do you know anything of Miss Neville? I can't help thinking that she has recently had some great grief."

"She'll always possess a grief as long as she has them parents of hers about," said Miss Mary impressively. "My first cousin does for them at the lodgings, Mr. Westwood. She's seen better days like the rest of us; and she has to take in quiet families now and then. She says the life that poor girl leads is awful. There's money and land in the family, which would have come to them if she had been a boy; and, as she wasn't, they can't forgive her. She was engaged to her cousin the heir, but she did not like him; and when he died suddenly they blamed it on to her, and said her conduct to him had made him reckless. It is a shame; she is sweet, Mr. Westwood, and deserves a better fate. But there, I must not gossip—Medina always says my tongue runs a great deal too fast."

"Oh, never mind," I said. "I longed to hear all that you have told me. I noticed how sad she was. But I can't help thinking she loved her cousin; her eyes are never free from tears."

"I don't know more than I have told you," said Mary Brown. "My cousin says that she hated him. Well, good night, Mr. Westwood. I'm sure that you will find 'Maude Vavasour' the very book to help you to pass the time. We're going to have a nasty night." And so saying, she handed me my books; and I went out into the small narrow street, down which the wind was already roaring in a most suggestive manner.

It was indeed a nasty night. Almost before tea (my lodgings did not rise to the heights of a late dinner) was cleared away. I began to see that the balcony would not have the pleasure of my

company that evening. The rain came down in streams, the carpet gently moved up and down like a theatrical ocean, and the wind howled and screamed as if a hundred demons had been let loose.

No, there was nothing for it but to make the best of a bad job; and, taking a firm grip of "Maude Vavasour," I sat down to read.

I had only just begun to open the books, peeping first into one and then into another, when something fluttered down on my lap, from Heaven knows where.

Of course, as I discovered afterwards, it had fallen from the book in my hand; but at first I really did believe that I had a message from the dead, for there before me were the well-known characters of Brian Ormonde's writing—so distinct, so curious, so unlike any other writing, I could not think that I was mistaken in believing



I met my fair unknown just emerging from the emporium carrying quite a stock of literature.

that I had at last received the token from my dead friend that I had so long been expecting.

It was quite ten minutes before I recovered myself sufficiently to be able to examine the sheet of paper; and then I discovered that, whoever the message had been sent to it certainly was not intended for me; for



Something fluttered down on my lap, from Heaven knows where.

it was nothing save a short epistle, imploring someone, whose name was not mentioned, to give him time, only time, when all his demands should be satisfied in full.

I could not understand it at all. That Brian, of all people in the world, should be in difficulties, unknown to me, was ridiculous. And I was about to tear the letter up somewhat indignantly, when my eye fell on some other writing on the half-sheet that had been blank when the letter left Brian's hands.

And I at once received a clue to the mystery; for on the other side, under the grimy signature of George Priestley, was set forth an account of sundry monies supposed to be due from Brian Ormonde, to him; and a statement that, if he were not repaid by Monday week, he would come to Neville Court, and then and there insist on seeing Mr. Neville, and placing before him a still further and more lucid account of all that Brian Ormonde had been, which was not the meek saint, he added, that the family was pleased to consider that he was.

A burning sense of indignation seized me, and had George Priestley been anywhere near, he would have been slightly astonished, I think. I knew the rascal so well. A smug-faced, lery billiard marker, who wormed himself into the secrets of every lad who was weak

enough to borrow money of him, and who was the scorn and byword of every decent man in the University.

That he should attempt to blackmail the Nevilles was not in the least extraordinary. The only extraordinary circumstance was, how he had come possessed of a letter that was most certainly, alas, in the hand-writing of my dear, dead friend.

This had so overcome me, that for some time I had not troubled myself to account for my present possession of the epistle. All I could think of was, how I could manage to get hold of Priestley, and drag out of his vile carcass the truth that, of course, he was carefully perverting to his own ends; but before I was able to come to any satisfactory conclusion on the subject, it was suddenly borne in upon me that I had no business whatever to be in possession of a letter that was most certainly the property of someone else.

Then I recollected who that someone else was, and I made up my mind immediately to introduce myself to Miss Neville, and regardless of *les convenances*, tell her precisely how matters stood; at the same time letting her know that she had left George Priestley's letter in "Maude Vavasour," and that it could not possibly have fallen into better hands than mine. Once more I took up the epistle and looked at the date. There was none; but allowing for the fact that the letter had had to be forwarded, and that it was now Wednesday, I came to the conclusion that there was certainly no time to be lost, or the fellow might turn up, as he said he would, and bully Miss Neville, even if he were kept from seeing the old people.

The night seemed to become worse every minute; the wind howled louder than ever, until a final blast appeared to literally throw itself against the house, like an enraged animal, that took it in its jaws; and shook it, finally casting it down contemptuously with a final shake. This final shake, directed as it was against my windows caused them to fly open madly, and the whole fury of the storm became apparent in my room.

Newspapers flew about like enormous birds; the wretched engravings on the walls swung about madly, until I hoped that they would be smashed; and the mantelpiece ornaments, after gyrating wildly for a few seconds, fell forward, and were reduced to chaos on the hearth in less time than it takes to relate the story. I rose, and, walking up to the windows, endeavoured to close them; but I discovered that the hasp of the fastening and one of the hinges were departed, and that I should be obliged to barricade the place if I wished peace to be restored.

I went out on the balcony, with the feeble idea that I had seen a thick cord there during my stay at Southcove, which I might utilize in my defences; but I was horrified to discover that Miss Neville, undaunted by the storm, had come out as usual, and was clinging to her balcony, while watching the progress of the storm.

The noise was really awful; the sea thundered in over the point, where even in the darkness one could see a line of white foam that told its own tale of the jagged rocks that stretched like teeth into the cove, and that had been the death of many a gallant ship. The great towering masses of cloud were driven rapidly across the sky, and ever and anon a pale, wild, watery moon would be visible for a moment, looking as if she were protesting vainly against the wild commotion that appeared to hurry her along, too, and prevented her doing her nightly duty; but she glanced out ever and anon through the veil of vapour and cloud that surrounded her, she sent short, brilliant shafts of light down the darkness

like silver arrows, that disclosed now and then the entire scene as clearly as if it were day-light.

One of those shafts had just fallen when I stepped out into the balcony, else surely in the blackness I should never have seen that Miss Neville was there.

In an instant I determined to speak, come what might, and although the howling of the wind made my voice almost inaudible, I went up to her and said:

"You must forgive me for addressing you, dear Miss Neville, but Brian Ormonde was my dearest friend, and I cannot allow his cousin to be in distress, and not offer her my help in any way that can be useful to her."

"Then you have found the letter?" exclaimed Miss Neville. "Oh, if only the wind would stop for one instant! I know I am not doing wrong; Brian would not be angry; and oh, Mr. Westwood, I shall go mad if something is not done!"

I started at hearing my name. How did she know it? I wondered; but I would not stop to ask questions. Already I heard behind me a dreadful smash, that told me, one of my enemies, the engravings, had dropped from the wall.

In another moment my landlady would be up, to see if I had gone mad; there was no time to lose.

"The wind is too terrible now," I said, "for our conversation to be satisfactory. Can I meet you anywhere to-morrow?"

"It must be this evening," said Miss Neville, wringing her hands.

"Could you not close your window, and remain here for half-an-hour? On a still night my father and mother would hear our voices; and something must be done. I hope, oh, I hope you will not think me crazy, but as you have read that letter, you will understand that this is not a time for me to be scrupulous."

Bang—smash! another picture had gone; things were becoming desperate.

"I will do what I can," I shrieked, "but I am afraid that will not be much. Creep over the balcony into my house, Miss Neville," I suggested, after a moment's thought.

"I will lock my door; no one shall know that you are there. The window once shut, we shall be safe enough."

Miss Neville hesitated for a minute.

"That would never do," she said, after a pause. "You must come round and call, Mr. Westwood; introduce yourself as a friend of Brian's; then I will let you out after you have paid your visit. I can manage the rest, I think. Now go, or else every picture in the room will be smashed. I shall expect you in ten minutes."

And so saying, she turned away; and as I went back into my room, I heard her window open, a swirl of air go through the house, and then all was peace—except in my chamber, however; there everything looked like the incarnation of war. There was nothing for it but to ring my bell and summon assistance, while I stood with my back to the window, keeping it closed until my landlord came.

Luckily, he was a "handy man," and, in less time than it takes to tell it, he was at work repairing the damages that were repairable; the pictures, thank goodness, were beyond his skill; while I, after making a very faint attempt at assisting him, took up my hat, and remarking that, as the room was so very uncomfortable, I had made up my mind to call on some friends, I went off next door, having no time to ponder on how I should introduce myself to Mr. Neville, of whose existence I had never heard until that day, not even from Brian himself.

I was shown into a room the very counterpart of my own. On one side of the fire crouched a man, who ought to have been in the prime of life, but who appeared almost any age, so crumpled up, so lined, so aged seemed his face and figure, while round his legs was wrapped a red rug, and his shoulders were embellished by a white shawl that gave him at once the look of the invalid that a collection of pillows at his back seemed to indicate that he was.

On the sofa on the other side, reposed a woman with the sweetest expression of countenance I had ever beheld; while Miss Neville sat on a low stool between them, holding the long white fingers of her mother's hand, gently stroking them between her own. She rose when I entered, and, coming towards me, she said:

"I have just been telling mother of our meeting, Mr. Westwood. She thinks it so good of you to come out such a night as this to tell us of dear Brian."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Neville. "Mr. Neville is so anxious to see you, dear Mr. Westwood. We are such wretched invalids, we know nothing of dear Brian's death. We could not go to the funeral, and——"

"We know all about it," growled Mr. Neville. "Her conduct did it," and he pointed a lean, trembling finger at his daughter's shrinking form. "I want to know about his life, Mr. Westwood; death is a dismal subject always, more especially on such a night as this."

I took my cue at once, and, as well as I could, I dwelt on all my dear friend's sweetness and goodness; and we remained talking until the clock struck eleven; when I rose to go.

Miss Neville came down, at her father's request, to



I was horrified to discover that Miss Neville was clinging to her balcony.



On the side of the fire crouched a man, who appeared almost any age, so old seemed his face and figure.

show me out. Instead of opening the front door she motioned me into a side room, and, turning up the gas, she at once began her story.

It seems that Miss Brown's cousin had been right, and that Mr. Neville had never forgiven his only child for being a girl, and that his one solace had been in planning a marriage between the cousins—a marriage that was mutually repugnant, and that neither ever intended should be carried out. Brian was already engaged to a charming girl—a lady, the daughter of his old tutor—who was fully cognizant of the curious position he held, and to whom Miss Neville had been goodness itself as soon as Brian had told her how he was situated.

Although Neville Court must come to him at his uncle's death, during his life he had not a shilling; and, although he had often implored his uncle to join with him in cutting off the entail, old Mr. Neville's pride would not allow this, and up to the last Brian remained dependent on his uncle for every farthing he possessed, in a manner that was so extremely galling to his high spirits that he could never be brought to confess his circumstances even to me, to whom he had seemed to tell everything, and had in reality not told a single event of his life.

In the middle of the Long Vacation, Ormonde's tutor died suddenly, leaving his daughter penniless. Of course, Brian married her, and equally, of course, Miss Neville knew the secret, and had to assist in keeping it from her father, whose fragile health rendered it imperative that all disquieting news should be kept from him as much as possible.

Here, then, was the situation; old Mr. Neville ignorant of Brian's marriage; pleased to think that, in default of male heirs, the Court would lapse to his daughter; utterly unable to bear the blow that the marriage would be to him, more especially when Mrs. Ormonde was most likely a mother, and Mr. Neville believing in Brian implicitly, too; while George Priestley had become possessed of the secret, and was using it to extract money from Miss Neville, who would give

all she possessed, she said, to save her parents from any more trouble and disappointment.

"You see, my birth was such a blow to them," she said, smiling sadly, as she concluded her long story; "and now they think the Court comes to me, my father is just beginning to love me. Fancy what father's feelings would be if this wretched man gets hold of him; I am sure he would never survive the shock, and then my dear gentle mother would die too. Oh! Mr. Westwood, she has always loved me; but her life is bound up in my father's. Oh, tell me what to do!"

Assuring Miss Neville that night would bring me counsel, and that I would see Priestley myself the following day, and bring her news on the Friday or Saturday at the latest, I went into my own room, meditating sadly enough on the state of things; but, most of all, I felt Brian's want of confidence towards myself. While I was pondering on all this, a thought literally rushed into my head.

Priestley possessed a secret of Brian's; could it possibly be some other secret, not the one we dreaded.

In a moment afterwards it all came back to me—Brian's love of the turf, his possession of a race-horse. I rose and opened Brian's desk—a task I had never yet felt equal to before.

Yes, there it was, all in black and white, neatly docketed; as were all Brian's papers, the last indorsed: "Priestley's receipt in full for which I thank God!"

I did sleep that night, I can tell you; and the next afternoon found me closeted with that delightful man, whose presence I did not leave until I held his confession written out plainly enough, on consideration that I did not prosecute him for endeavouring to procure money under false pretences. Brian's letter had appeared to him a trump card to play; it had confessed nothing, but implied much. Of course, Miss Neville would only be too glad to shield the name of the man to whom she had been engaged to be married, and would buy this, and a few more equally compromising, at his own price. How Brian had been such a fool as to write those letters, I never made out, or why he had not seen them burnt; but, on looking at the receipt, I found it only bore the date of the day of Brian's death, and doubtless the elation at this had made him remiss in demanding the letters that he had very likely forgotten all about.

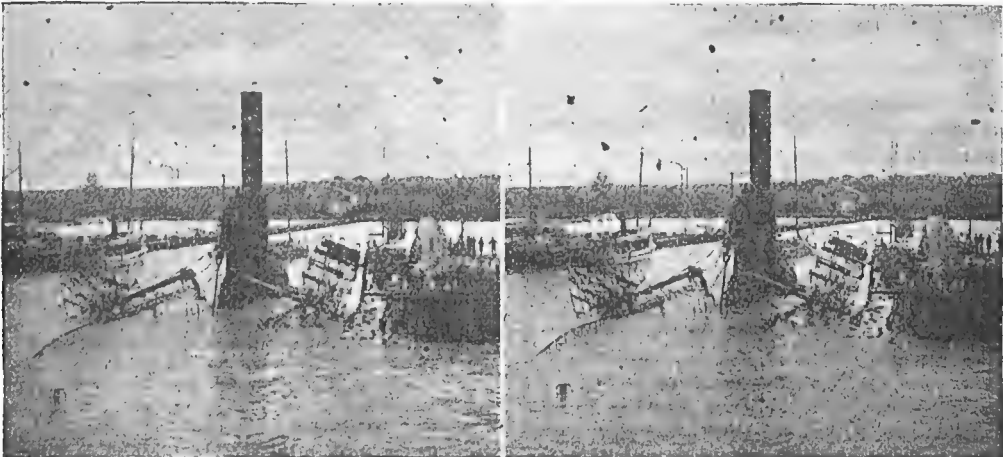
To make a long story short, when the Nevilles and I left Southcove, Miss Neville was engaged to be my wife; and, though we considered it very wrong, we never told Mr. Neville to the day of his death that Brian's son, not Hilda's, would inherit Neville Court. Yet old Mrs. Neville, living still in her old house, hardly knows which of the boys she prefers; while she finds in Brian's widow the kind companion and loving child she requires so badly, and that Hilda's duties at Westwood Grange could hardly allow her to be. Hilda and I often talk about Brian's promise to visit this earth again; and though, of course, I have never set eyes on him, at times I cannot help thinking that some mysterious influence was at work to constitute Hilda and myself next-door neighbours at Southcove.

MRS. PANTON.

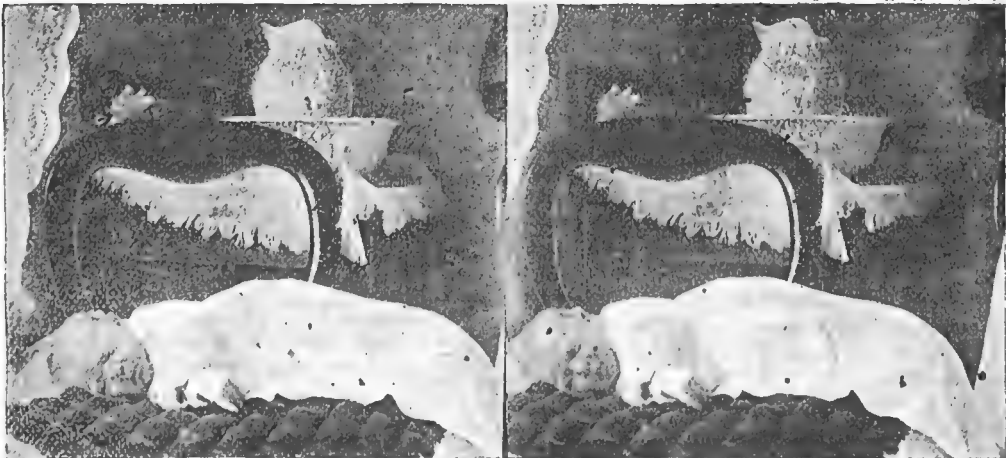
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By HEADON HILL.

Author of: "*The Peril of the Prince*,"
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CHAPTER I.

THE CREAKING OF THE CABIN DOOR.

It was two o'clock on a calm summer night, and the steamship *Trojan*, homeward bound from the Cape, was nearing the end of a prosperous voyage.

This was the last unbroken night's rest the passengers were likely to have on board, for at about the same hour on the following night the vessel would be due to reach Southampton water.

Between decks all was hushed in the stillness of sleep; the hum of the distant engines and the steady pulsing of the screw were the only sounds that broke the silence, save the occasional footfall of the watch above. Mark well how these things happen. If this last night at sea had chanced to be what sailors call "dirty"—when crockery clatters, timbers groan, and doors bang naturally—this story would have ended, sharply and rudely, in the next ten minutes.

A solitary swing lamp left burning in the deserted saloon shed its feeble rays upon the closed doors of two rows of state-rooms, one on either side. In the upper berth of the sternmost cabin on the starboard side a man was sleeping, but the lower berth was empty, for the sleeper had paid the extra fee for the privilege of exclusiveness.

It was a seamed and weather-beaten face that lay on the pillow—a face whose deep trenched lines and rich mahogany tan told of toil and hardship—it might even be of vagabondage—under many a changeful sky. One hand lay scarred and sinewy upon the coverlet, but the other—the right hand—was thrust under the pillow in an attitude suggestive less of luxurious ease than of a soldier laying to his arms. The swell and curve of the bedclothes denoted that the sleeper was a large-framed man, and of such a height that the berth was none too long for him. He lay upon his left side, facing the door of the cabin.

He had been breathing with the steady regularity of sound slumber, but suddenly there came a slight catch, scarcely long enough to be called a pause in the clockwork respirations, and at the same moment the hand which was under the pillow shifted its position by just a hairsbreadth. There was a quiver, too, in the eyelids for about the tenth part of a second, and then the steady breathing went on as before, keeping time to the throb of the main shaft and

the wash of the propeller. It would have been a delicate ear that could have detected any other sound in the dead quiet of the summer night.

And yet there had been a sound—a sound so trifling that it might well have passed unheeded by the most wakeful, but loud enough to have startled the keen senses of the occupant of the stern cabin from slumber, and to have braced his every nerve to vigilant tension. When a man has passed twenty years of his life in mining camps, he wakes easily, and this one was waiting the turn of events with a revolver in his grip, and eyes, half-unveiled, that struggled to pierce the gloom.

Five minutes passed, and there was no sound in the neighbourhood of the cabin save the somnolent breathing of him who lay in the upper berth. Before the expiration of the sixth th enoise that had awakened him fell gently and not unharmoniously upon the listening ears again. It was the faintest, slightest possible creaking in the hinge of the cabin door, which of itself, perhaps, would have meant little had it not been accompanied by the appearance of a slender thread of yellow light on the wall just inside the doorway.

The steady breathing continued, but the watcher had withdrawn his hand from the pillow now. The thread of light broadened into a ribbon, and the ribbon into a good-sized band, and then, as the door opened slowly, and, inch by inch, wider still, the diffused light from the saloon lamp entered the cabin with sufficient strength to show four lithe fingers clasped on the edge of the door.

At this point the door creaked again, and the fingers were withdrawn, not to be replaced. But after quite a long interval a rounded shadow began to encroach on the band of light on the wall, and a human head was protruded stealthily into the cabin. The head contained two gleaming eyes, which sparkled in the obscurity, and it was followed—still with the same furtive gliding motion—by a pair of lean shoulders, which came stooping and stealing round the angle of the door.

Not till the midnight prowler was well inside and creeping nearer and nearer to the bedplace, did the supposed sleeper cease his stertorous breathing or give sign of wakefulness. Then, with a quick jerk of his whole body, he sat up in the berth; the faint light through the open door glinted along his pistol in a straight line with the intruder's chest, and a pleasant voice, said, very quietly:

"I've got the drop on you. A step further and I shall pull the trigger."

The shadowy form stopped as quickly as though the pistol itself had spoken.

"Why, Michael," it stammered, in harsh tones that tried

to wheedle, "then you are awake and living after all. For goodness sake put that thing down. It is only brother Simon, come to see if you are right and comfortable, I had a dream that you were in danger, Michael—that is what brought me here."

There must have been some false note in the excuse despite the profession of kinship, for never for an instant did the pistol waver from its line. The identity of his visitor seemed, if anything, to increase the vigilance of the man in the upper berth.

Keeping the weapon levelled and his eyes on the intruder, he found, with his left hand, a box of matches, and contrived to deftly light a candle-lamp that hung at the side of the bunk. This done, he lowered the pistol with apparent carelessness to his lap, as though the occasion for alarm were past, but the black muzzle among the bed-clothes kept the same direction, and the rugged forefinger still played ominously with the trigger guard.

"Sit ye down, Simon, on yonder chest," said the rightful occupant of the cabin; "I'd like to have a crack with you now you're here. This is the second time in six months you've shown anxiety about my welfare in the night time—the second time you've paid me a visit between twilight and dawn, without sending in your card, so to speak. Are you quite sure in your own mind, Simon, that it isn't the 'Kimberley Elephant' you're so dead set on, rather than Michael Standridge?"

The other man turned and seated himself on the chest, taking the opportunity as he did so to slip something keen and bright from his sleeve to the pocket of his coat, for he was fully dressed.

The muzzle of the pistol in the berth moved idly round and covered him in his new position. There was light enough in the cabin now to show up the startling contrast between the two men. He who called himself Michael Standridge was a finely-built, square-shouldered giant, looking hardened rather than battered by the obvious roughness of his tussle with the world. The sunburned tan which browned his broad, strongly-marked features and great garbled hands was all in keeping with his muscular development.

The owner of the lithe fingers and stooping shoulders was cast in a different mould. Though some years younger, he would have struck the casual observer as the older of the two. He was of the city type, and looked as if his habits, whatever they may have been, had agreed with him as ill as the fresh air had benefited the other.

Altogether he was a mean and unwholesome-looking individual; and yet the fidelity with which that pistol followed his every movement suggested that he might possess qualities better understood than appreciated by the big man who watched him.

"Now, I will just put the case to you clearly, Simon," proceeded Michael Standridge, when the other was seated; "and as you were once a clerk in a lawyer's office—a police-court lawyer's, at that—you will be able to reckon it up and see what kind of a conclusion any reasonable body of men—say a jury—would come to after what has happened twice in the last six months."

"From the way you keep fooling about with that pistol I should say you suspected me, your own brother, of something crooked," interrupted the other. "I had a stupid dream that frightened me, I do assure you, Michael. I don't set up for being a saint, and I allow that I take a little personal interest in the 'Elephant,' as your lawful next-of-kin, you see, but as to harming you, you ought to know me better than that, Michael."

"I know you pretty well, Simon," responded the other dryly, "and I know that since you chose to join me at Kimberley I have had to watch myself closer than ever I did in the Black Hills of Dakota, with the Sioux whooping around for my scalp; ay, and closer than in the rowdiest saloon in the newest mining camp that ever held the scum of creation. But," he went on, dropping the touch of irony, "I admit nothing. I do not admit that I have the



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NO STRINGENT DIETARY.
NO DEASTIC RESTRICTIONS.

AN UNFAILING TEST.

'Elephant' with me, and least of all do I admit that you are my next-of-kin, or have reason to take an interest in the stone. It is true that my poor mother elected, to her cost, to marry a blackguard, instead of remaining a widow; but because you are the offspring of that union it doesn't make you my brother, Simon Hoathley."

"I didn't expect this of you" he said. "How do matters stand between us, then?"

"I was coming to that," proceeded the elder man. "This is how the facts lay, I take it. After wandering up and down the earth for twenty years I fetch up at Kimberley Diamond Fields. I have had luck at first, and I mention it in a letter I have occasion to write to Simon Hoathley, but he is not so keen on playing brother to an unlucky miner, and he doesn't trouble to reply. A year passes and I have a stroke of fortune—so great that it is the talk of the Colony. I find a stone of such size and brilliancy that the

hadn't been for what followed. Simon being a bit of a lawyer, I allow him, at his own request, to draw up a bit of a partnership deed between us. He brings it to me to sign, and says as it's only formal, there's no need for me to read all the jargon through; but not being one to put my name to what I haven't knowledge of, I take the liberty of reading the document, and find that my affectionate kinsman has put the date of the partnership back a year so as to cover the 'Elephant.' I don't make any fuss, but I tear up that deed, and carry on without any lawyer's tomfoolery. Simon has a fair half of what we get, but that doesn't amount to much, as, barring the 'Elephant,' the claim was never a lucky one.

"I decide to go home to England and settle down, and Simon elects to come along too. I pay his passage, so that he may have what little he has got to keep him afloat till something crops up. The day before we sail we put up at a hotel at Capetown, and I am awakened in the middle of the night by a noise in my bedroom—much the same as I was awakened just now. I see the figure of a man going through the pockets of my clothes and searching here, there, and everywhere. Then the figure begins to come towards the bed, creeping and crawling, and the moonlight makes something glitter in his hand. I leap from the bed and catch at him, but the man trips me up and runs from the room. In the morning I discover a carpet slipper on the floor, which I recognise as belonging to Simon."

"Oh, Michael, Michael!" interrupted the visitor, "why didn't you mention all this before? It can be so easily explained. I swear I didn't enter your room. I must have left the slipper the evening before, when, as you will remember, I came in to say good-night."

"I repeat that I bring no charges," proceeded Michael. "I only put the case to you straight—what would a man in my position, who sets store by his night's rest, do under these circumstances? I take it that his course is plain. At the first chance he parts company with the disturbing element, and I don't mind saying that you are a disturbing element to me, Simon Hoathley."

"You mean, I suppose, that I am to be cast off when we reach Southampton?" was the reply.

"I mean that it will be better for my health, and possibly better for yours, if we each go our separate ways after to-morrow," said Michael. "There is no casting off in the matter. I never asked you to join me, and you have had more than a fair divide of what was got in partnership. You must have close on £300 worth of

diamonds—quite enough to keep you afloat for the present. Twice have I been disturbed—remember, the third time may be fatal!"

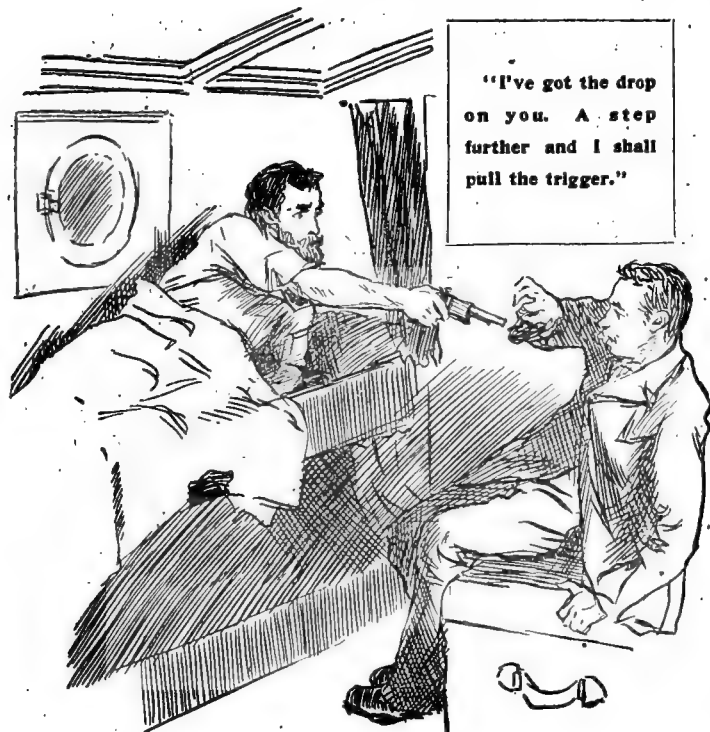
Simon Hoathley sidled off the chest towards the door, his eye following his half-brother's still persistent pistol. He had listened with a certain air of downtrodden humility while Michael was stating his case. In his last words, spoken as he squirmed out of the cabin, there was nothing out of keeping with his virtuous and deprecatory attitude.

"Yes, my dear brother," he said, "I will not forget. The third time would be fatal, I think you hinted. Very well, so be it, and good-night."

CHAPTER II.

BLINDING THE TRAIL.

LEFT alone again, Michael Standridge lay still in the berth, all his faculties keenly alert, but relaxed so far that



diamond is called the 'Kimberley Elephant,' and the newspapers get hold of the facts and print them. The *Cape Argus* goes a step further and publishes the name of the finder. This is copied into the English papers, and what happens then? Why, Simon Hoathley turns up at the diggings, professing ignorance at the lucky find, and only actuated in taking his long journey by a desire to clasp his 'dear brother's' hand again. He begs to be taken into partnership, and being an easy going chap, I allow him to share the claim without asking for references of character. If I had done so—I find later from a digger who knew something of him in London—I should have heard that Simon had been in jail for embezzling his employers' fees."

"Oh, you heard that, did you?" said the other. "Well, go on, it was a false charge."

"Of course," said Michael, "they always are. But previous convictions weigh with judges all the same. I shouldn't have thought so much about that, however, if it

ASTHMA

WHY is it generally thought that there is no cure for

ASTHMA,

CHRONIC BRONCHITIS, Shortness of Breath, BLOOD SPITTING, etc.?

BECAUSE the usual treatments only confine themselves to combating single symptoms instead of attacking the root of the disease.

BE SURE THERE IS ONE

ABSOLUTE LASTING CURE

Sufferers will receive, post free, **FREE OF CHARGE**, particulars of the famous **WEIDHAAS HOME-TREATMENT** when applying to **THE PAUL WEIDHAAS' HYGIENIC INSTITUTE**, 16 T.A. Buckingham Road, Brighton.

Mr. Weidhaas has tried the treatment on himself, after having been given up as incurable, and cured himself, and had then practised it for over 19 years in many thousands of Special Cases. Many having suffered for over 40 years have been cured by his treatment (in some instances even at the age of 70 or 80 years), after having been **GIVEN UP AS INCURABLE**. No interference with daily occupation. Send description of complaint, and mention if you suffer from **COLD FEET**.

Read the following testimonial, one out of scores received:



Mr. J. POMFREY.
(From a photo.)

Chronic Asthma and Bronchitis combined with Indigestion (after 15 Years' Standing) Cured.
"I am pleased to inform you that I am now restored to good health since being under your treatment. I used to feel tired of life almost. My breath was so short, and my cough so bad, I used to get up in the night, for I used to feel that I should be choked. I used to suffer with indigestion very bad, and could not keep my food down, and used to keep coughing and retching in the morning. I could not take any breakfast, but I can now get a good night's sleep, and eat a good meal without any of the distressing symptoms, thanks to your Treatment."
"JESSE POMFREY, Warwick."
(Full address on application.)

CURABLE

Shilling packets
Kaputine "the" safe
Remedy for **Headache**

WARNING. Instead of using the common **White Headache Powders**, which generally consist entirely of a crude drug, which has been condemned as dangerous by the medical papers, insist on having a bona-fide anti-quack remedy, recommended by such eminent medical authorities as **Dr. RAMAGE, L.R.C.P., Dr. THURSTIN, L.R.C.P., late Dr. BOYD-WILLIAMS (Liverpool), the Editor of the Medical Journal, "Health," etc., etc.** The name of this safe remedy is **KAPUTINE**.

ALL LEADING CHEMISTS SELL IT, OR CAN GET IT FOR YOU IN A FEW HOURS.

Sold by **BOOT'S, TAYLOR'S, DAY'S, WHITE'S** and other Stores. Most Co-operative Stores sell it.

PACKETS, 1/- SAMPLES ONE PENNY,

or **KAPUTINE LIMITED, HUDDERSFIELD,** will send it **FREE** for 12 stamps.

WORTH A CROWN A DOSE.

Indigestion, and Low Spirits.

It is astonishing to what an extent we are all liable to occasional ailments. A mental trouble, pecuniary care, or food eaten in the wrong manner or at irregular periods, or food in itself indigestible, may, and often does, give us an "attack of the blues," a Bilious disorder, a disagreeable fit of Indigestion, or a Sick Headache. During these periods our energies and strength appear to wane away, so that we are loth to undertake the day's duties, and find difficulty in summoning sufficient resolution to carry them out. Besides which our Nerves are disorganised, and minor troubles, otherwise accounted "trifles light as air," cause us to fret and fume to a degree out of all proportion to their importance. Everything is, indeed, jaundiced to our view, so that we fear impending trouble, pecuniary losses; and we anticipate troubles for ourselves that, happily, are rarely realised.

As a remedy for these and other Stomachic and Liver ailments we know of no remedy so safe and effective as our old friend, **Guy's Tonic**, whose merits we have investigated and are fully able to endorse. Many of our readers keep this remedy by them, and take an occasional dose to prevent possible Digestive or Liver trouble. Minor ailments are best treated promptly with a proved remedy like **Guy's Tonic**, which affords immediate benefit and effects permanent good. In many instances that which is but a slight ailment may become a serious or a chronic disease. **Guy's Tonic** acts curatively and restoratively even in the more serious phases of Stomachic and Liver disorders. It is pleasant to take, skilfully prepared, and, as we have found out by personal enquiries, gives universal satisfaction to those who take it.

Nausea and Flatulence Removed.

Mr. W. Campbell Muir, of Inistrynich, Dalmally, N.B., writes:—

"For the last four months I have been suffering from Nausea, Flatulence, and Depression. Occasionally three days would pass without my having eaten solid food. I tried various remedies which did good for a day or two, but the effects were not permanent. I thought at last I would try **Guy's Tonic**, and with great pleasure I have to inform you that I had only taken half a bottle before my Appetite returned, the Flatulence disappeared, and I am now as well as ever."

A new size (Six-Ounce Bottle of **Guy's Tonic**, price 1s. 1½d., is now on Sale at all Chemists and Stores.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK.

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2% on CURRENT ACCOUNTS, on the minimum monthly balances when not drawn below £100.

The **BIRKBECK ALMANACK**, with full particulars, post free.

FRANCIS RAVENSCHROFT, Manager.

he allowed himself to ponder deeply on the experience of the night.

"The third time's fatal," he muttered to himself. "I did not like the tone in which he assented to what I said. I meant it for a threat, but that sneaky, sneering voice seemed to turn the threat against myself. The next time may be fatal, but not to him, he was thinking, maybe. In that case, he intends to follow me when we land and try again. I don't value my own life much," his thoughts ran on, "except that before I go under I must find my little Marian, and hand over to her the proceeds of all these years of wandering and toil. Small enough they would have been had it not been for that lucky morning when my pick turned up the 'Elephant.' How its face seemed to smile at me in the sunshine as it peeped from the blue clay." And Michael put his hand under the pillow with a loving gesture that would have told tales had there been anyone there to see.

Then his mind ran back to the circumstances that had sent him adrift to the ends of the earth after three short years of wedded life. Michael Standridge came of honest yeoman's stock in Dorsetshire. His father had died while Michael was yet a boy, and his mother had shortly afterwards married James Hoathley, a scampish lawyer at Poole, whose main object in saddling himself with the widow had been to get possession of the snug homestead and farm that had been unreservedly left to her.

As might have been expected, the marriage turned out badly. James Hoathley quickly dissipated the greater part of the Standridges modest patrimony, and then drank himself rowdily out of the world, leaving his widow with an attenuated income and the additional burden of another child. The poor woman did the best she could with the two boys, and died of the struggle when Michael was twenty and Simon was eight. The latter was taken to London by an aunt of his father, and Michael, finding that there was absolutely nothing left after the remnants of his mother's property had been realised and her debts paid, set about earning his living by the first means that came to hand, which chanced to be brick-making.

Michael was just four-and-twenty when he met the woman who eventually proved his undoing—an assistant in a milliner's shop at Dorchester, near which town he worked.

She was a pretty, empty-headed girl, and, above his station though Michael was in speech and appearance, he had some difficulty in getting her to listen to a man who toiled for weekly wages in a brickfield. But the young fellow was as determined in his wooing as in other things, and a summer's courtship ended in a marriage between the ill-assorted pair. Michael had saved enough to make a comfortable little home, and for the first two years and more all went well.

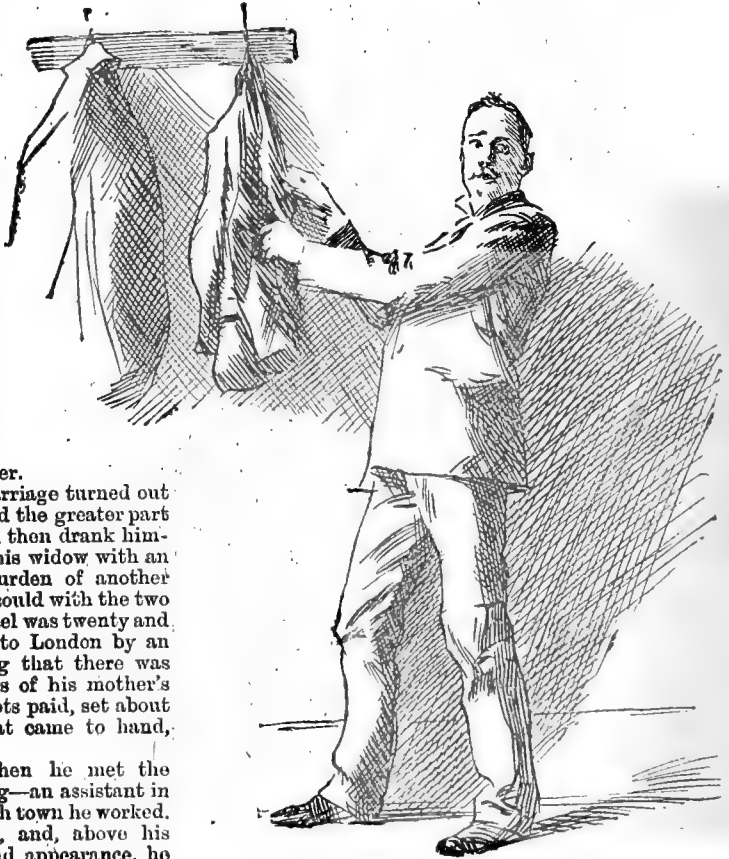
A girl child was born, and Mrs. Stanbridge, though occasionally plaintive about her fall in the "social scale," did her duty fairly well by her husband.

Then suddenly, two years after the baby's birth, things went all wrong in the cottage. Household affairs were neglected, little Marian grew thin and fretful, and several times when Michael came home from work he had to wait outside his own door till Mrs. Standridge returned, flushed and cross, from an expedition to the town. Michael bore it all patiently for some time, and then on the very evening when he had intended to speak his mind, he found his house door open, his wife and child gone, and a note on the table to the effect that he had looked his last on both of them.

As usual on these occasions, the neighbours knew a good

deal more than the wronged husband. It came like a thunderbolt upon Michael to hear now for the first time allusions to a "strange gentleman" with whom his wife's flight was popularly coupled. This person had been staying at the hotel in the town as a summer visitor, and hasty inquiries showed that he had not only been often seen in the neighbourhood of the cottage, but had given up his rooms at the hotel on the day of Mrs. Standridge's flight.

Having exhausted all the means of search in his power,



The signalman was too astonished to speak.
[See next week's instalment.]

the bereaved man turned his back on his desolate home and sailed for America, where for years he led a wandering life amid the wild scenes of the frontier. Thence he made his way to the Cape, and finally to the Kimberley diamond fields, where fortune, quickly followed by Simon, came to him.

Since they parted at their mother's graveside Michael had only written two letters to his half-brother, the first to briefly announce his departure from England, and the second, written after many years, and destined to be unanswered, to tell of his arrival at Kimberley, and of the persistent ill luck that had so far befallen him. As boys there had been no love lost between the two, and Michael, never having apprised Simon Hoathley of his marriage, believed him to be in ignorance of it.

(To be continued.)

**We don't ask you
to buy
A pig in a poke.**

printed descriptions have raised. Advertisers who resort to these devices not only injure their own business but, by reflex action, the business of honest people who are anxious to deal fairly, but who from association fall under the odium of suspicion. Though we think the name of "Chambers," backed up by that of the *Daily Express* should be sufficient guarantee to anyone of the *bona fides* of any book offer, yet we recognise that there are people who would still prefer to make quite sure by ocular proof. We wish to meet such people quite frankly, and to give them the proof they ask for, because we are quite sure that when they have gone fully into the circumstances they will be perfectly satisfied that every word we have said is true.

CHAMBERS'S ENCYCLOPÆDIA

To the General Manager,
Daily Express, Tudor Street, E.C.
Please send me an illustrated prospectus
giving specimen pages of the new Ency-
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Daily Express special offer in connection
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Name
Address
A19

TWENTIETH CENTURY EDITION

is not a reprint of an old edition printed off antiquated plates, but is in every sense a new, original, and up-to-date work. Every article appearing in the Twentieth Century Issue has been revised or re-written up to the early days of the present year, and there is not a single reference in the entire thirty thousand articles which will be found old or out-of-date. That is a very bold statement, which we could not possibly make if it were untrue; but we say it unhesitatingly, and challenge anyone to deny it. We insist upon this point strongly, because other encyclopædias described as "new" have been put on the market, and purchasers have subsequently discovered that so far from being new the works in question are so old as to be completely valueless. What we want you to do is to verify our words for yourselves. You can do this by applying to any leading bookseller, who probably has a copy of the new issue on exhibition, or, if this is inconvenient, by sending us the subjoined inquiry form filled up with your name and address, and upon receipt of it we will send you by return an illustrated prospectus of Chambers's Encyclopædia (Twentieth Century Issue), which will conclusively prove to your eyes that the Encyclopædia offered on such exceptional terms by the *Daily Express* is really a genuine bargain, and is not a specious reprint that would be dear at any price. We cannot make you a fairer offer than that. Don't put it off until you have forgotten it, or until the *Daily Express* special offer is withdrawn. Drop into a leading bookseller's to-day, or else, if you prefer it, tear out at once and send us the subjoined inquiry form. It will cost you a halfpenny in money and about two minutes in time, and in return you will have full particulars of the greatest book offer ever made to the public.

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and we
want you to have proofs.**

The 20th Century Chambers' has neither peer nor competitor, for all other encyclopædias are made on an old and cumbersome plan. The 20th Century Chambers' alone meets the requirements of the man of this day and age. It is exhaustive, yet condensed; its information is universal, yet readily accessible; it is made for the busy and practical man of to-day, who wants complete and exact information, but is unwilling to run over a 30-page article, when the same facts can be condensed perhaps into a single page, column, or paragraph, as in Chambers'.

THE EDITOR'S PAGE.

MY distinct duty this week is first of all to point out to you the fact that a new serial story begins on page 474. You would probably discover this for yourselves, but I prefer not to take any risks. Mr. Headon Hill's story is a first-class one, and I am quite sure you will enjoy its perusal.



WHEN this number is published a good many of you will still be away holiday-making. Well, I trust your Easter vacation will be an enjoyable one. At the moment of writing the weather does not look altogether propitious. The snow-flakes, indeed, are flecking the window panes, and the air of Henrietta Street makes one think that an army of old women have been "picking geese," as we used to be told when children. Really, the calendar has to be consulted to prove that it is Easter and not Christmas time. Sometimes I wonder if the scientists have not miscalculated time, and whether the seasons are slipping round into one another's places.



TALKING of holidays, I often find myself asking why people flock to the seaside always. A sniff of the briny is grateful to the "town" man, I know, but there are hundreds of inland spots where the air is pure, and where the tinge of brown or red may be wooed back to the faded cheek at a far smaller cost than at the seaside. There's many an honest villager anxious to let his cottage for less than the rent of a single room at the average watering-place. And the absolute quiet which an inland place affords is far more beneficial to the jaded City man or woman than the bustle and bank-holiday atmosphere of many coast towns. Many is the happy hour I've spent basking in some secluded hollow among the Sussex Downs, staring vacantly at the sun-kissed woods, with not a sound save the gentle hum of insects, and—B-r-r-r-r, atishoo! Here am I talking of basking in the sun, with nothing in the air but snow-flakes. Make up the fire, Sebastian (Sebastian is the office-boy), and do keep that door shut.



WITH the questions of national defence and commercial supremacy in the air, it seems strange that a man wishing to become a sailor, should find it difficult to do so. Nevertheless,

a correspondent, "Tall," finds it by no means easy. Acting on my advice, given a week to two ago, he has written to some of the leading steamship companies, but they reply that they only want experienced hands. But, as "Tall" remarks, "Surely they cannot all be experienced sailors. They must have new hands sometimes." Which certainly sounds convincing enough.

The only further advice I can give my correspondent is, that he should hie him to the nearest sea-port, and personally apply to any skippers or owners he may encounter. The life of an inexperienced seaman is not quite a bed of roses, but I have no doubt "Tall" has considered all that.



HERE is a pleasant letter from "Miss A. N.":

"The new wrapper of *Short Stories* is a decided improvement. You are introduced to a person; he is very plain—indeed, you are almost repelled by reason of his unattractiveness—he smiles, and lo! his face is transformed! you want to see more of him (take that to heart, Mr. Editor, the advice is gratis).

"I am an old, but not a constant, reader of *Short Stories*. P.W. is the paper we have always taken. The other day I was turning over a pile of newspapers, and came across an aged number of P.W. I believe it was one of the first numbers that Pearsons published.

"I think I am down in your bad books, for I have never yet won a prize in *Short Stories*; but I shall keep on trying until my luck turns. When I see my name in print, I am so vain that I buy several numbers of the discriminating paper and distribute them among my friends.

"The latter clause is not meant as bribery, Mr. Editor, but you must know one takes a fatherly interest in a paper in which one's own work or name has appeared."

You must keep on, "Miss A. N.," and doubtless you will succeed in winning a prize. Why not try the effect of becoming a *constant*, instead of merely an occasional, reader?



"E. B. H."—An answer to your question appeared some months ago in *Pearson's Weekly*. I reprint it for your benefit:

Strategy has been variously called "the art of generals," the "art of making war on the map," and that "art of directing rightly masses of

troops towards the object of the campaign"; while tactics consists in the "employment and manœuvring of troops in the presence of, or in contact with, the enemy." Thus tactics is subsidiary to strategy. Strategy has a place in the absence of the enemy, while tactics has not. "Strategy merges into tactics when the enemy comes within striking distance," and the latter has sometimes been called the "strategy of the battlefield." Lord Wolseley, in the Soldier's Pocket-Book, points out that "strategy is a constant science; its rules are similar to those in the time of Caesar. Tactics is an art that varies with the spread of civilisation. Most great inventions so bear upon the armament, equipment and conveyance of troops, that the tactics of armies have to be frequently remodelled in consequence."

TO CONTRIBUTORS.

I AM open to consider original stories of any length from 1,500 to 4,000 words. The character of stories required may be best ascertained by a careful reading of the contents of the paper. All MSS. are dealt with promptly, and every effort is made to return rejected stories which are accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes. At the same time, I cannot hold myself responsible for MSS. accidentally lost. Communications of this kind should be addressed The Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C.

SHORT STORIES
ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0 10 0
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Series discount: 5 per cent. for 13, 10 per cent. for 26, 15 per cent. for 52 insertions.

Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, April 16th, if intended for the issue on sale April 30th, and dated May 4th. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

MR. GEORGE R. SIMS

Tells the Story of his Famous Discovery
for the Hair,

"TATCHO."

In the *Referee* Mr. George R. Sims, the famous poet and dramatist, journalist and playwright, and the writer of "Mustard and Cress" over the signature of "Dagonet," recently explained to a wondering public that he had to a band of philanthropic millionaires made over his rights in the new discovery, the hair-grower "Tatcho."

Some considerable curiosity having been aroused by the pronouncement on the subject, a representative of the *Westminster Gazette* called upon him to inquire if the statement was to be taken seriously or with a grain of salt—a condiment not at all out of place in connection with "Mustard and Cress." "Oh, yes," said Mr. Sims, "it is quite true. I have been supplying the public with a hair restorer gratuitously, but the correspondence on the subject has lately grown so vast that I am quite unable to deal with it. As correspondence continued to pour in upon me, I at last determined to hand the recipe over to a syndicate who would make it up and supply the public with it. This I have done, and that is the story of the 'George R. Sims Hair Renewer.'" But you call it 'Tatcho,' Mr. Sims," said the representative. "Yes, that is a Roman word signifying genuine."

IS YOUR HAIR

weak, thin, or falling? If so you should give a trial to "Tatcho." You are invited to try it on exceedingly favourable and even generous terms, the George R. Sims Co. having decided to distribute a quantity of large trial bottles of "Tatcho" to enable those who have not yet

profited by Mr. Sims' discovery to do so. They do this in the belief that such distribution will enable the preparation to become more widely known, and will introduce it to every home in a more satisfactory manner than could be effected through an extravagant outlay in advertising. Anyone sending 1s. 10d. will receive a bottle post free, and the use of this bottle will prove beyond possibility of doubt that there is no hair-renewer known to science to-day equal to "Tatcho." A sample bottle will convince you of this fact.

"Tatcho" is a brilliant, spirituous tonic, the colour of whisky, free from all grease. It is not a dye, and contains no colouring matter.

If you value your appearance—and who does not?—get a bottle of "Tatcho" to-day. It acts as an invigorating tonic. It stops the hair falling, creates a luxuriant growth, and imparts to it a bright and youthful lustre.

Readers of *SHORT STORIES* may avail themselves of this offer by cutting off the corner of this advertisement and sending it to the offices of George R. Sims Co., 81c Great Queen Street, Holborn, London, W.C. together with Postal Order 1/10. Addresses should be legibly written.

GEO. R. SIMS CO.,

81c GREAT QUEEN STREET, LONDON, W.C.

"TATCHO" is sold by Hairdressers, Chemists, and Stores
throughout the world in bottles at **1s., 2s. 9d.,**
and **5s.**

Mr.
GEO.
R.
SIMS'

HAIR
RENEWER.

4/6

LARGE TRIAL BOTTLE

1/10

POST FREE

COUPON.

S.S.

1901.

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BEECHAM'S PILLS

THESE ARE
THE PILLS
THAT CURE

ALL BILIOUS
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DISORDERS

(IN BOXES)

1½ & 2½

THE MEDICINE
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